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Cornelius O'Dowd
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CORNELIUS O'DOWD

CORNELIUS O'DOWD

Charles Lever

UPON

MEN AND WOMEN

AND

OTHER THINGS IN GENERAL

I care not a fig
For Tory or Whig,
But sit in a bowl and kick round me

THIRD SERIES

WILLIAM BLACKWOOD AND SONS

EDINBURGH AND LONDON

MDCCCLXV

270. f. 24*

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED IN BLACKWOOD'S MAGAZINE



TO

SIR JAMES EMERSON TENNENT, BART.

ETC. ETC.

MY DEAR TENNENT,

WHEN I LATELY TOLD YOU IN LONDON I WOULD DEDICATE MY NEXT VOLUME OF O'DOWDERIES TO YOU, YOU LOOKED ABOUT AS MUCH ALARMED AS IF I HAD INVITED YOU TO DINNER TO MEET THE HEAD CENTRE OF THE FENIANS. YOU WERE, HOWEVER, TOO POLITE TO REFUSE WHAT WAS MEANT AT LEAST AS A POLITENESS. NOW COMES THE TEST OF YOUR COURAGE. TO YOU, WITH ALL ITS INDISCRETIONS, I DEVOTE THIS BOOK, ONLY SORRY THAT I HAVE NOTHING MORE WORTHY OF AN OLD FRIEND'S ACCEPTANCE, AND, AT THE SAME TIME, WELL PLEASED TO WRITE MY NAME ON THE SAME PAGE THAT BEARS YOUR OWN, AND SIGN MYSELF,

YOURS IN ALL CORDIALITY,

CORNELIUS O'DOWD.

LAGO MAGGIORE, Dec. 1, 1865.

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CORNELIUS O'DOWD.

CHANGING HOUSE.

ALMOST all of us know what it is to "change house"—to go off from our old haunts, the corners we have loved so well, the time-worn ways of home, and install ourselves in some new domicile, where everything is new, strange, and unsettled. There are few things in life so full of discomfort. The more a man sees of the world, the more is he disposed to believe that a certain routine—a sort of quiet monotony in the general tenor of life—is one of the choicest aids to happiness. In fact, until this same "dull monotony," as some would call it, be established, the real enjoyment of variety can never be experienced. There can be no furlough where there is no discipline.

The business of life, besides, requires that even

the idlest and most indolent of us should have a certain method. There must be meal-times, and these, let me observe, are in a great measure the determining influences which render us active, energetic, and useful, or dispose us to sloth, neglect, and good-for-nothingness. Tell me when a man eats, and I will tell you when he works.

We are, in a word, far more slaves to ourselves than we like to acknowledge; but I am decidedly inclined to believe that, on the whole, the servitude works well. Now the house we live in for a number of years cannot fail to exert a great influence over us. The same places impress the same trains of thought, till at last we give ourselves up to a ritual, in which the drawing-room, the dining-room, and the study are the masters, and certain inanimate objects, on which we scarcely bestow a thought, become our impulses and our directors.

With a change of house all this is revolutionised. You have to plot out your home—that is, your life—anew. You have to discuss aspects and views, the points of the compass, and the prevailing winds—to balance with yourself the advantages of the rising against the setting sun—to think where you can sleep most profoundly, and dine most snugly; and above all, if a man of my own temperament, where you can install yourself in a so-called study, a spot

religiously believed sacred to meditation and labour, but in sober reality a little Sleepy Hollow of refuge, dedicated to that noble pastime that is said to pave a disreputable region—a pastime which, in all its vague unreality, I would not exchange for many a practical tangible pleasure. With a change of house all these devolve upon you. You cannot begin the daily work of life till they be determined, nor can you determine them without a constant reference to the past. Your drawing-room may be larger and loftier, your study may offer more space or more accommodation; but depend upon it there will always be something, be it insignificant or small, to regret—something in which the bygone will contrast favourably with the present. That this is a condition of human thought, I am inclined to believe; at least all my friends who have been married a second time have confidentially imparted to me something that would go far to confirm it.

Déménagement is a dreary process, however we look at it. It is not alone that the old “properties” are very generally ill suited to the new dwelling, but that we never knew they were so old and timeworn until we had turned them out of their vested localities, and exposed them ruthlessly to remark and inspection. It is like reviewing a veteran battalion, where the crutches outnumber the muskets.

How long is it, too, before you can reconcile yourself to the new ways about you! There is a perpetual distraction in the sight of new objects, very jarring and uncomfortable; things which had no pretension to press themselves upon your notice stand obtrusively forward and ask to be considered; and, last of all, nobody can find anything. It is either locked up in the green packing-case or the brown box, or it has been left behind, or perhaps stolen. Scores of useless old trumperies are sure to be transported—things that could not possibly pay for the carriage—but which have an immense value in your servants' eyes, if only that they guarantee the immaculate integrity that remembered them. These, like poor relations, will thrust themselves reproachfully in your way at every moment, and it will be weeks before the last of them shall be consigned to its appropriate *oubliette*.

The change of domicile is always regarded as an act of indemnity with regard to every domestic shortcoming. The cook cannot manage the new spit; he has not yet learned the ways of the new oven. The footman has not found out how to make the dining-room fire without filling the house with smoke. No matter how favourable may be the circumstances of your new abode in comparison with the late one, your household will find abundant

subject of disparaging contrast. How unjust to accuse human nature of ingratitude! Only listen to any man's account of his first wife's virtues.

It is clear, then, that whatever may be the compensations eventually, the first moments of change are neither ways of pleasantness nor paths of peace. Indiscipline is master of the situation, and life is carried on, like the American war, by substitutes—a process to the full as costly as it is uncomfortable.

Now, if these be very serious inconveniences to the family, what, let me ask, will they be when incurred by a whole nation, when it is not a mere household of some fifteen or twenty people who change their domicile, but a people? Such is the case now with Italy; and really it is one of the most formidable pieces of internal convulsion a State has ever been called on to encounter. I speak not of a Court. A Court can comparatively easily change its seat. The King who receives at Caserta may without difficulty, on that day week, hold his levee at the Pitti. Court furniture and Court flunkies are everywhere much alike, and for the few commonplaces uttered by royalty all localities are pretty equally adapted. The difficulties in the present case are not the transfer of a kingly household, but the displacement of a legislature—the transport of a whole executive, with all its

various orders of people, from the Minister of State in his cabinet to the porter at the gate—the conveyance of these people and their belongings to another city a couple of hundred miles off—the disruption of all the ties that bind them to home and friends, all the little ways and habits by which they fashioned their daily lives—the sudden removal of some forty or fifty thousand people to a country as much foreign to them as though under another rule; for, bear in mind, the Piedmontese is only partly intelligible to the rest of Italy, and is even less like the Tuscan in his nature than in his tongue.

I have once or twice heard the complaints of an English official on being sent to Dublin or Edinburgh, and heard how piteously he bewailed for his family the hardship of such a banishment, though in his case there were not really any of those elements which impart the sense of a strange country. Let us imagine, then, what a heavy grievance this change of capital must be to all the servants of the State. These are all now to be drafted off like settlers to a new colony—they and their wives and children, their man-servants and their maid-servants, and all that is theirs. And, as though to make the illusion more perfect, a contract for wooden houses to hut the new settlers has been entered into, so that on their arrival on the savannahs of Tuscany they may feel

themselves like squatters in the bush, only needing a few Calabrian brigands to complete the *tableau*, and realise all the horrors and cruelties of a cannibal neighbourhood. It is said that Cipriano la Gala and his ruffian associates, whose murders and assassinations have been the terror-themes of southern Italy, have had their sentence of death commuted to perpetual imprisonment through the direct interference of the Emperor Napoleon! Is it too rash a guess to surmise, that when that great disposer of Italian destiny decreed the change of capital he also intended to liberate these wretches, so that when the poor Piedmontese found himself in the new land of his destitution he might be able to realise in his own experiences the horrors of brigandage without the expense of a journey to the Neapolitan provinces? We are told that the change of capital is a popular measure throughout central and southern Italy, and that even Lombardy looks on it without displeasure. I can readily believe this. There is no more beautiful spectacle than the equanimity of our friends at our misfortunes. Piedmont was not liked; she had not any of the graceful gifts which conciliate and win regard. I am not very certain that, even if she had possessed them, she would have deployed them to cultivate the goodwill of the Neapolitans. But this is an aspect of the question I decline to regard.

It is the material difficulties of the situation alone I desire to consider, and I return to them.

Florence is about to receive the population which will be withdrawn from Turin, and she prepares for the task in a most suitable spirit by doubling the price of everything. It is not, then, merely that the Turinese has to quit his home and his friends, but he has to take up his abode in a city rendered doubly costly by the very news of his coming. This, of course, must be submitted to. Political economy has its maxims about supply and demand, and there is no help for the hardship. But there is, besides this, another, and, I think, a most unfair grievance. The Florentines are not content with the immense boon that has befallen them, but go about complaining loudly of the hardship of the invasion that awaits them, how life will be rendered dear, and, above all, what competition they will have to encounter with the Turinese traders and shopkeepers, who are certain to open houses in Florence, and contest with them the traffic of their own city. Already such complaints are rife, and even in ranks of the community where one might have thought a more liberal and just spirit would have prevailed. The very bankers of Florence are in arms at the thought that Turinese capital should seek employment in the new metropolis, and Piedmontese enterprise demand a sphere for

its exercise beyond the walls of their now deserted city.

It is not merely, then, that you have to change house, remove your properties and *penates*, desert the pleasant familiar places you had grown to ; but you have to remove to a land where you are not loved, and will not be welcomed. This makes the task much harder. The change is a charming thing for your neighbours : they will make fortunes by it—become richer, and greater, and more influential than ever they dreamed of being—and yet your presence amongst them detracts terribly from the enjoyment. They want the offices you filled—not *you* who filled them. They want that rich population of foreign Ministers and their followings; they want that Court you were so proud of, and the King you loved so well; and they are quite ready to tell you that their claim to them all lies in their superior civilisation, and in the higher culture of “gentle Tuscany.” Of all the daily difficulties, the hourly embarrassments, the plan is to entail, it is needless to speak. Let any one imagine the condition of an ordinary family, with half its baggage at its late residence, and one-third of the other half on the road, with all the losses and damage of the way, with the discomforts of a new abode, and the not over-civil disposition of the new neighbourhood ;—let him magnify this to the size of

a nation, and he will have to own that these are not slight nor fanciful grievances.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs has to refer to a despatch, and he is told it is with the archives waiting to be shipped at Genoa. His colleague of Home Affairs is in the midst of a correspondence with the prefects, and finds, for want of the early part, that he has been contradicting himself most flatly. He of Grace and Justice is unable to remember without his notes, that are not to be found, whether a certain brigand was protected or not by the French at Rome, and is consequently in doubt whether he should be shot or pensioned. All is confusion, disorder, and chaos. Nobody can answer any question, and, what is worse, none can be called to account for his insufficiency. It is a bill of indemnity with regard to every official's shortcoming; and just as you would be slow to arraign the cook for the burnt sirloin, or the butler for the dingy look of the silver, on the first days of your *déménagement*, so must Ministers bear with patience every indiscipline around them, on the plea that everything has to be done for "the best," which, in plain English, means in the very worst of all imaginable ways.

How Florence is suddenly to dilate itself to the proportions the exigency calls for—how the Post is

to receive and transmit the increased correspondence—how Government officials are to know at once how to find each other—how all that work of executive rule, which requires both exactitude and despatch, is to go on in a new place, as though it were a mere clock which had been transferred from one town to another—is not easy to see.

Let a man take his own case. How soon, after the turmoil and disturbance of a change of abode, does he resume the ordinary business of his daily life? Can he continue with the unbroken thread of any occupation he has been engaged in? Is he able, in the midst of the disturbing elements of a new home, to sit down calmly to any work that demands deep thought and consideration?

Think, then, what these difficulties become where the labour is not only vast but complicated—where each department has to depend on some other, and co-operation is all-essential—where the delay of an answer or the want of clearness in an order might be the cause of great disaster; and then imagine what are the difficulties which await the Italian executive, at a moment, too, when it is called on to confront the perils of an embarrassed exchequer and a dissatisfied population.

They say Florence is but the first stage on the way to Rome. My impression is that the present experi-

ence will suffice for them, and that, when they have counted the cost of the *déménagement*, they will be satisfied to stay quietly where they are, believing in the truth of the proverb, that "two removes are as bad as a fire."

THE "ROPE TRICK."

WE must surely have fallen on dull times—there must be a very remarkable dearth of subjects to interest or amuse, or we should not have given so much of our attention to the proceedings of the Davenport Brothers, and have our newspapers daily occupied with the attack or defence of these "Circulating mediums." It is hard to say whether credulity or incredulity comes best out of the controversy, or whether a calm bystander would incline to the side of those who see in these performances the dawn of a new era of discovery, or hastily put these men into the category of common conjurors.

For my own part, I think they deserve full credit for the way in which they have baffled discovery and evaded exposure. Just as some one said that the Great Duke had "a little more common sense than all the rest of the world," so have these men one

trick more than all mankind. The Hindoo and the Professed Juggler could do some, but neither of them could do *all* of the Davenport rogueries; and though this be a small bill with which to draw on Fame, let us not dishonour it.

The Rope trick, as it is called, would appear to be familiar to a large number of persons; at least there is scarcely a lecture-room in a provincial town, scarcely a mechanics' institute, which has not seen one or two amateur performers perfect adepts in this exploit. In this feat, after all, originated the great celebrity of these men. It was the fact that, being bound by persons thoroughly conversant with all the mysteries of knots, tied with the practised skill of sailor hands, their bonds crossed, recrossed, and interwoven with every device of subtlety, yet, as the newspapers say, "in an incredibly short space of time they were found to have released themselves, greatly astonishing a crowded audience, who cheered lustily."

Nor is this all. The lights being once more extinguished, and in a space equally brief, they were discovered to be once again involved in all the intricacies of their bonds, every knot and every crossing being exactly as at first, so that the most minute examination could not detect the slightest variation. To a man like myself, to whom a moder-

ately tight coat is a strait-waistcoat, and who regards the commonest impediment to freedom as little short of a convict's fetter, this performance does indeed appear miraculous. I am consoled, however, for my own ineptness, by remembering what a number of specialities this world has room for, and that there are a variety of other tricks which I could not perform, and very probably never shall be called on to attempt. At first, therefore, my sympathies were in favour of these nimble fellows, and it was with a sort of impatience I read those letters to the 'Times' and the 'Post,' of people offering to perform the rope trick for the benefit of this or that charitable institution. I suppose drowsiness stole over me as I sat. I am naturally indignant at any imputation of being asleep, so that it could not have gone to the extent of slumber; but I certainly had reached the hazy stage, when sounds are murmurs and sights mere dissolving views in a foggy atmosphere. I fancied a friend was discoursing with me on these Davenport people, and that his arguments were a mere *résumé* of all these furious letters I had been reading. "It was an old trick—one of the stalest tricks; a trick that no conjuror of credit would have deemed it worth while to exhibit. The tying might be more expertly done in one case than another, and a few seconds more consequently employed in the act of

liberation ; in the end, however, the conjuror was certain to succeed, with no other inconvenience than a certain flushed look and a slightly accelerated pulse. What I cannot comprehend," said he, "is your astonishment! Are you really amazed, Cornelius O'Dowd?" asked he ; "or is this a got-up astonishment—one of those traits of youthful trustfulness I have seen you more than once perform before a too confiding public? Come, old fellow, none of these penny-a-liner affectations with me. You know well—ay, sir, you *know well*—that you have, as our neighbours say, 'assisted' at exhibitions of this kind scores of times."

For a moment I felt as if passion would suffocate me. My head, I believe, had got jammed into the corner of the chair, and I breathed with difficulty.

"If that grunt means dissent, sir," continued he, "unsay it at once. I will stand no dissimulation." I felt choking, but he went on. "You claim to be a sort of 'own correspondent to all humanity ;' you presume to say that you are eternally on the watch to report whatever goes on of new, strange, and remarkable in this world of ours ; and here you stand with pretended astonishment at a feat of which even the last dozen years have offered us fully as many instances—ay, instances which called forth ample

discussion and noise enough to addle the whole kingdom. The first time I ever witnessed the trick myself," he went on, "it was done by Lord John Russell." I started with amazement, but he resumed. "The tying had been done by Cobden and John Bright, but very clumsily and very ineffectually. Whether it was their enormous self-confidence, or that they underrated the performer on account of his size, I cannot say; but the prevalent opinion was, none of the knots were drawn tight enough, nor was there sufficient cord employed. At all events, when the lights were produced, he was found seated with his bonds at his feet—a little flurried, as was natural, and with a heightened colour. The lights being extinguished—the 'House up'—after a very brief interval, we found him tied up exactly as before, every knot fastened just as Cobden and Bright had left it. The company 'cheered lustily,' some fully convinced there was more in it than our philosophy had yet fathomed; others, manifestly out of envy, alleging it was the simplest of all the rogueries in a conjuror's wallet. The discussion grew positively angry, and Mr Disraeli stepped forward and said that there was really nothing in the trick at all, that he had done it scores of times to amuse a family circle, and was quite ready to exhibit now, if it could

amuse the public. Loud applause followed, all the louder that the performer professed he was quite willing that Lord John himself should assist in the tying. Nothing could be fairer than this; all seemed charmed by the magnanimity. I wish I could say that the result was as favourable as the opening promised. Unfortunately, however, when the lights came, there he sat with the cords around him, somewhat deranged and disordered indeed, but still sufficiently tied to show he was perfectly powerless, and so exhausted by his efforts besides, that it was necessary to cut the ropes and get him out into the fresh air to recover!

"His friends were much discomfited; his own self-confidence had seized them, and they went about saying, 'Don't be afraid, he's sure to do it; he has watched John closely; he knows the trick thoroughly,' and so on. And now they were driven to all sorts of devices to explain the failure. They even went so far as to say that in John's case the tyers were accomplices, and the whole thing a 'sell;' others declared that Dizzy would have done it if the lights had not come so soon; that he was not fully ready: but a very shrewd friend of my own told me that it was a knot of his own making—a bit of vain-glorious display he had insisted on exhibiting—that

really bound him, and but for this he would have done the trick just as well as the other.

"Of course this brought John back enthusiastically into public favour, and all went about saying he has never failed yet; and though they have got a rope over from America, and even tried some special hemp from Russia, it's all the same; he steps through the meshes, and sits there as free and unconcerned as need be.

"It is true, however, he objects to let a Frenchman tie him—a conjuror by profession—a certain Louis Nap, who proposed to test him by what they call 'the Polish Trap.' John demurred, and said it was a game that would never amuse an English public; not to say that the representation was too far off, and in a part of the town very inconvenient to come at. In fact, he made twenty pretexts, and ended by saying that if he were to be bothered any more, he'd remove his lodgings, go and live up-stairs, and give up conjuring altogether.

"Cob and Quaker John are perhaps not on as good terms with him as they were formerly, for they go about grumbling, and darkly hinting what they'd do if they had only another chance with him. My own opinion is, that they'd fail just as they failed before. He is a master of his art. We all of us saw how,

tied and fastened in every direction, his feet to his neck, and his hands to his ankles, he contrived one day to put on Mr Newdegate's coat, and actually wrote a letter to the Bishop of Durham ; and before the ink was well dry on it, there he sat in his own clothes, innocently asking who could have composed that indiscreet epistle ?

"There is not much music in his performances, I admit. In that respect the Brothers Davenport may beat him ; but for the 'rope trick,' I'll back him against all Yankeedom ; and yet few men think less of their 'bonds' than Pennsylvanians."

P.S.—While I write I read that a son of the original juggler has made his first appearance, and the newspapers call it a very successful appearance, before the public. He boldly declares he is prepared to do all the old tricks of his father, and a few new ones especially his own. He called upon a very crowded assembly to test his qualifications, and tie him in any way they pleased ; but they were good-humouredly disposed to applaud his pluck and not prove his efficiency. As they very reasonably observed, what can it possibly signify whether he be tied or loose ? I agree with them perfectly ; but if he should persist in these appeals, and torment us with a repetition of his challenge, let me suggest one

species of tying that I have never known fail. It has held the most unruly spirits as peaceable as lambs, and requires neither skill nor trouble in the application. It is simply done by a few yards of red tape. The man who has these draped round him, ever so loosely, never struggles any more.

RAIN—RAIN—MUCH RAIN.

Of all the people of small pursuits, I know of none equal to those who chronicle the weather, measure the rainfall, and keep a register of the falling barometer. In the unbroken series of their observations you are led to mark how unceasingly they seem to labour. Watching the clouds night and day, not a drift, not a shower escapes them. Noting each change of wind, they tell you how, at 40 minutes after 2 A.M. on the 17th, the wind changed to S.S.W., and at the same time the moon, being then in the second day of the last quarter, a slight rainfall occurred, after which a fresh breeze sprang up and continued till daybreak.

What hopeless and unprofitable twaddle is this! and why, to record it, should any man sit up all night, to the destruction of his domestic habits and the risk of bronchitis? These things tell nothing—lead to nothing. Mon. Mathieu de la Drôme himself

only predicts rain when we all of us see it approaching ; and there is another animal, not noted for wisdom, who has done as much as this in our behalf for centuries back !

Chronicle the rainy days in an English climate ! Why not register the infanticides in Pekin ? Why, rain is our normal condition. We live in a perpetual conflict with rain. We invent mackintoshes and mud-boots, capes, coats, and alpaca umbrellas. We diet ourselves against moisture by a course of stimulant living ; and the prospect of being “ wet to the skin ” begins at our school-days, and dogs our steps throughout life. No wonder if we be moody ; but the gloom for which foreigners give us credit is not so much that we are depressed as that we are damp. No wonder is it that we take from time to time such despondent views of our national prospects, our oppressive debt, our growing pauperism, our decaying coal-fields. We are all frogs, and what so natural as that we should croak !

Now, instead of inflicting us with a census-return of our calamities, why should not some bright-natured Christian keep a record—a very small note-book will suffice for it—of our days of sunshine, of those passing moments when the sky was blue and the air dry ? Here would be matter for pleasant retrospect and enjoyment. Keeping an annual rain-score is simply

writing down three hundred and sixty-five days, with one more for a leap-year.

That climate has an immense influence over temperament cannot, I think, be questioned. The mingled indolence and impulsiveness of the natives of southern regions, the apathy and the energy, are the very reflex of long seasons of calm broken by violent hurricane and storm. There is that in those lands of warmth and sunshine which disposes to a life of ease and enjoyment. Nature herself gives you the initiative, and in the glorious vegetation, the brilliant colouring and the balmy air around you, you would stamp yourself as ungrateful not to be disposed to happiness.

Our dreary skies, however, suggest work ; there is no holiday-look about that leaden canopy and that beating drift. It will do to toil in, however, though not made for pleasure. Have at it, therefore, in the mill, or the factory, or the graving-dock, or the saw-pit. Other skies may be filling the olive-berries and swelling the grapes, yours is the one to make money in—*Suum cuique*. The gods have given you a rare workshop, see that you make good use of it. Nothing so plainly shows how an Englishman conforms to his climate as his misery—his actual misery—in a land of bright weather. His *ennui* is suicidal. Of all the things he has learned, how “to do nothing” has never

been acquired by him, and he finds himself suddenly in a situation where exertion is impossible. Now, the Spaniard or the Italian can live as devoid of all occupation as the lizard on the wall yonder. Like him, let there be only sunshine; they ask no more. "Bull," however, wants to be up and stirring. He wants to ride, or walk, or row—to do something, anything rather than sit down in unemployed monotony. He has never risen so high, or sunk so low—which is it?—as to believe mere existence enjoyment; and there is an honest shame associated with his notion of idleness that spoils him utterly for the *Far niente*.

Take him away from volcanic rocks and arid mountains, with dried-up torrents and a basking sunshine; carry him back to an Indian-ink atmosphere, muddy roads, and a swooping shower, and you will see the man will recover himself at once. He'll put on his second epidermis, a mackintosh, and be off to his occupation, whatever it be, without wasting a thought on the weather. The moody temperament is in reality only the working temperament. It is the resolute fixedness of a man on something to be done that gives him this air of stern determination. Now, foreigners neither understand us nor our climate, and I declare I am not surprised that they are as little charmed by the one as the other. They only see the gloom of either.

A damp people may be humoristic, but I suspect they will rarely be witty, except in that sardonic drollery which we see in Ireland, and where the jest is so often made at the jester's own expense. We certainly have little of that light-hearted wit which characterises Frenchmen, and which makes an epigram worth a long discourse.

Being damp, we are an indoor folk, given to coal fires and much canvassing of our neighbours; and I have little doubt that a great deal of the prudery of our social life, that strict watch and ward we keep over each other's morals, is a question of rainfall, and that if we had more sunshine we should have less scandal. Perhaps it may be, that, being always moist, we imbibe overmuch of what goes on around us; but of a verity we are the most gossip-loving people of Europe.

If marriages, too, be made in a region where there is no rain, one can imagine under what difficulties conjugalities are carried on in moist wet countries. We have all heard how mud has influenced the fate of Poland. More than one revolution has grown out of it. Some of the heaviest reverses that brave people have ever met with have come of mud. I believe that rain is as potent an element with us; and if you would subtract from our lives all the times we have been soaked through, and all the hours spent in repairing

damage, you would find a tremendous gap in the working period of our existence.

No wonder that the Roundhead injunction about "keeping one's powder dry" should be transmitted as the expression of wisdom, only that in its seeming difficulty it appears to resemble another adage about putting salt on birds' tails.

Like Mark Tapley, we come out strong under difficulties, and in spite of this everlasting drip, drip, we have become a people not ill to do in worldly wealth, though perhaps not exactly as influential and powerful as our Daily Press would represent us. What we might have been, what we might have done, if we had not been always in a drizzle, is not so easy to say, though it might be matter of curious speculation to inquire whether an occasional glimpse of sunshine, or a transient gleam of warmth, might not have rallied us out of that air of gloomy depression which is recognised throughout the world as the English temperament.

At all events, let us have no more of these rain-registries. No man was ever the jollier from having a catalogue of his small debts hung up over his chimney-piece. Rain it will, that I know, and I can't help it; but I've no reason in life for conning over a comparison of all the days I was wet through in last January, with my pluvial experiences of the present

month. Why cannot these Prophets of Evil take up some other theme of national humiliation? Why not give a list of the people, with names and addresses, who have drawn blanks in the Frankfort Lottery? Why not of those who regard Mr Seward as the model of a polite letter-writer?

Now for my umbrella; I'm off for a walk.

A NEW CAREER.

It is a very hopeful consideration, that as the world moves on the march of discovery is always opening some new sphere for the employment of human skill and human intelligence, so that occupations which at first only engaged the attention of a few individuals, as it were specially fitted for the task, become by degrees fashioned into regular professions—careers as distinctively marked as any of the recognised walks by which men stamp their social station. Photography, the telegraph, the various forms of manufacture of gutta-percha, are instances of what I mean, whose followers are numbered by tens of thousands.

It is very pleasant to reflect on this. It is gratifying to think that with the spread of knowledge there is a spread of the means of supporting life: nor is it less agreeable to find that what were

regarded as the luxuries of the rich but a few years back, have now become the adjuncts of even humble fortune. Nothing more decidedly evidences the march of civilisation than the number of a man's wants. Simplicity is savagery; this we may rely on; and I was much struck the other day by the force of this fact, as I saw an Italian shepherd with a red umbrella and blue spectacles tending his sheep on the slope of the Apennines. How unlike, if you will, the picturesque Melibœus; but how far less exposed to rheumatism than Tityrus, as he lay on the wet grass under his beech-tree!

I am old enough to remember the anxious discussion there used to be about overstocked professions and careers crammed to excess. I can recall a time when people spoke of thatching their barns with unemployed barristers, and making corduroy roads with idle curates. We hear very little about these things now. Grumbles there are about under pay occasionally; but it is rare to hear a man say there are too many doctors or too many attorneys. Novel-writing, indeed, is perhaps the only career actually overstocked: but the fiction-writers have their uses too; they have banished from society in a great degree the colloquial novelist—the most intense bore in creation—so that we should be grateful to them, as we are to the dogs in Constantinople: there

are no other scavengers, and but for them the streets would be impassable.

I like, then, to think that if I were beginning life again I should have a wider field for my choice of a career, and that there are now a number of pleasant pasturages which, in the time of my boyhood, were dried up and unprofitable wastes. I like to feel that a number of men who like myself never felt a vocation for regular labour, need no longer be a burden on their richer relatives, and that while the great highways of the world are as wide as ever, there are scores of bypaths, and even some little short cuts, to Fortune, well suited to those who are not hard walkers, or over-well prepared for the road. The capable men will always take care of themselves. For your clever fellow I have no more sympathy than I have a sense of charity for the rich man. Neither needs what I should give him; all my interest, all my anxiety, is for those hopeless creatures who can do nothing. Stupid as boys, stupider as men, they grow up to be the reproach of their friends for not having "done something for them." How few families without one of these shooting-jacketed, cigar-smoking, dreary nonentities, who gazes at his own image in 'Punch,' and thinks it the caricature of his friend—fellows with no other aptitudes than for eating, and with a settled melan-

choly of disposition that seems to protest against the wrongs the world is doing them.

It is for these incurables I want an asylum. Hitherto we have been satisfied to send them to our colonies; we have shipped them to New Zealand, Australia, Vancouver Island—wherever there was talk of gold to be grubbed we have despatched them: not hopefully, indeed, far from it; but with that craving for momentary relief that makes a man glad to renew his bill without distressing himself at the instant how he is to meet it eventually; and, like the bill, these fellows come back to us with a heavier debt to pay—their manners a little coarser, their hands a little harder, more given to brandy, and less burthened with scruples. Sydney or Auckland or Brisbane, or wherever it was, was a humbug—no place for a gentleman: the settlers were all scoundrels. Life was a general robbery there, and throat-cutting and garotting were popular pastimes. What scores of such stories have I heard from these green-eyed, yellow-faced, long-necked creatures, to whom emergency had never suggested manhood, nor any necessity called forth a single quality of energy or independence!

Bad as they were before, they are far worse now. They have veneered their indolence with the coarse habits of a lawless, undisciplined existence, and

they bring back to "the family" their slothful self-indulgence, garnished with the graceful amenities of life "in the bush." What are we to do with them? It would be absurd to think of educating them for a learned profession, and many of them are above a trade. You pester your friends in power to get them something. You peril your soul's safety in all the lies you tell of them—of their rectitude and good conduct and suchlike. You apologise for their educational deficiencies on pleas of bad health or accident, and profess a heartfelt belief in their capacity to be policemen, tidewaiters, vice-consuls, or taxgatherers. You know in your heart what a mine you are charging, but you meanly hope that you may not be there on the day of the explosion. But I will not go on. I need not dwell on what is in the experience of almost every one. These creatures belong to our age just as much as the cholera. All times have probably had them in one form or other, but we see them as a class, and we recognise them by traits as marked as any that stamp a career in life. What will you do with them? I ask. Are you content to see them settled on the country as a sort of human national debt, and to call on others to support the charge? or do you desire to regard them as something eminently conservative—some remnant of ancestral

wisdom that it would be an act of desecration to destroy?

Certainly such are not my sentiments. If there be nothing for which these people are fitted, I say then, let them do something for which they are not fitted. The spectacle of idle incapacity is as offensive to an active and industrious nation as the public exposure of any hideous disease.

Now it is not always easy to hit upon a remunerative career which shall neither require education nor abilities, neither skill, capacity, nor even industry; and such is our present desideratum. We want an employment suitable for a gentleman—all these creatures I speak of are so-called gentlemen—which shall not demand anything above the first rudiments of knowledge; which shall neither exact early rising nor late retiring; which can be fulfilled in any easy morning hour, or, if left undone, will entail no evil results; and above all, which shall be well paid. I ask proudly, is it not a triumph to our age that such a career exists, and that hundreds, I might say thousands, are now deriving from it means of ease and enjoyment, who, but for it, would have been in hopeless indigence and want?

In this age, too, of pestilent examination and inquiry, in which the humblest occupation must be approached through a fellowship course, what a

blessing to think there is a career that asks no test for which there is neither fitness nor unfitness, and whose followers stand on an equality that even angels might envy !

You are impatient to know what I allude to, and I will not torture your eagerness. If, then, there be of your family one too ignorant for a profession, too indolent for commerce, too old for the army or navy, hopelessly incapable of every effort for himself, and dreading to lie down on others, with a vague idea that he has a vested right to smoke, lie a-bed, wear lackered boots, and have his hair dressed daily by a barber—if, I say, it be your privilege to include a creature of this order in the family census-return, make him a Director. Director of what? you ask. Director of a company—a joint-stock company with a capital of two millions sterling, paid up—whatever you like. It shall be Zinc, Slates, Sardinian cotton bonds, a Discount bank at Timbuctoo, or Refrigerators for Lancaster Sound. It shall have its offices in Cannon Street, and a great City capitalist its banker. Two guineas a-day—five when the Board meets—cab-hire, luncheon, the morning papers, a roaring fire, and a rather jocular style of conversation over the shareholders and their aspirations, are the rewards of office. Can you picture to your mind an easier existence than this? Time was that every

indolent man wished to be a bishop ; but a bishop is not what he used to be. A bishop is now badgered and baited by all around him. His dean inclines to painted glass, and the archdeacon would shy a stone at it ; and there is a thin-faced vicar who writes weekly for advice and guidance, and has grave doubts about the interpretation of a passage in Joshua. I tell you the bishop has other trials as well as Mrs Proudy. But the Director—the Director before whom the green door with the oval pane sways noiselessly, while the gorgeous porter, whose very gold lace hints a dividend, bows obsequiously as he throws wide another portal—is indeed a great man.

To stand back to the fire, and talk thousands and tens of thousands ; to glance over the balance-sheet, and sign your name after six or seven figures in a row, as though your autograph had some virtue in it ; to listen to that slang of the share markets that has a clink of money in its jingle, and hear of gigantic “ Operations ” with overwhelming profits ; and then to sit down to your basin of turtle and fried fin, with a pint of madeira, are not mere material enjoyments, but soar to the height of noble emotions, in which the individual feels himself an honour to humanity and a benefactor to his species.

To employ the simple language of a report now

before me, I would say "the institution now supports above eight thousand persons, who, but for its timely succour, would be not only in a state of utter pauperism and destitution, but from their previous habits and well-known tendencies positively perilous to peaceful citizens. Besides those permanently on the books of the society are a large number who have received occasional aid, and who may be said to have been rescued by the institution from the paths of vice and debasement."

To this touching appeal, which I have copied almost literally from the advertisement of another Magdalen, I will not add one word ; but I fervently hope we shall hear no more of Destitution, now that we have got Direction.

AN IMMORAL CONSIDERATION.

I READ in the journals that "an officer of rank" at Vienna has bequeathed the whole of his fortune to his nephew, on the condition that "he should never read a newspaper."

I believe our English law strictly prevents any testator from imposing an immoral condition on his heir; and I therefore am strongly disposed to think that such a bequest as this I have quoted should not be considered as binding.

Had the "officer of rank" declared by his last will that his nephew, in order to inherit, should be blinded or deprived of his hearing, he could not have more egregiously violated every sentiment of right feeling than by this cruel edict. In fact, he would virtually consign his unhappy heir to both of these calamities together.

Now, it may be fair enough to tolerate the eccen-

tricities of the living man. It is not impossible that in his character there may be many traits which will compensate for all his oddities. The whim or caprice he may ride as his hobby may not indispose him to generous actions or kindly sentiments; and we may, besides, always indulge the hope that, with a wider experience of the world and its ways, he may live to get over the delusions which once haunted him, and act and behave like his fellows.

Death, however, excludes this charitable hope, and I think it very questionable policy to give the character of permanence to what every consideration of sound sense or true physiology would regard as an abnormal and mere passing condition.

That the man who made such a will as this was insane, I will not say; but I unhesitatingly declare that he imposed a condition repugnant to good sense, and totally opposed to every consideration of reason and judgment. First of all, he assumed—and of all tyrannies I know of none greater—to dictate to another, for the whole term of his life, a condition of moral blindness. Secondly, he presumed to judge not alone what all newspapers were in all lands, but what they might be in years long after his death.

That any man about to leave the world should like to declare to it before he went, "I have no sym-

pathy with you; I don't care for you—for your wars, your struggles for liberty, your sufferings, or your triumphs. Nothing to me whether you be rich or poor, in sickness or in health; whether your homes be happy, or your fields be desolate; whether the crimes of your people decrease, or that new forms of vice call for new modes of repression. I don't want to know if education be spreading through your land, or to hear what results have followed such enlightenment. I am alike indifferent to the nature of your laws, and the mode in which they are administered. Uninterested in the great changes which affect States, I do not ask to be informed what the world thinks of them; of that public opinion which is the record of what condition humanity stands in at a given era, I have no desire to hear. Enclosed in the shell of my selfishness, I am satisfied to lead the life of an oyster. I compound for mere existence, and no more."

Now, I ask, is it such a nature as this that should be permitted to make a formal bequest of his bigotry and ignorance? Should the law lend itself to ratify a compact whereby this man's crass stupidity shall be perpetuated?

I am aware he was a German; and much may be forgiven him on the score of narrowness. I know, too, that his warning applied peculiarly to the jour-

nals of his own land. And it is but fair to own that a German "Blatt" is about the dreariest reading a man can fall upon. The torrent of rubbishy phraseology in which this beer-bemuddled people involve their commonest thoughts—the struggles they make at subtle distinctions through the mazes of their foggy intellects—the perpetual effort to regard everything under some fifteen or five-and-twenty different aspects, belabouring a theme, and kneading it as a baker kneads his dough—make up a mass of entanglement and confusion that would drive a practical energetic people to the verge of distraction.

That a man should interdict such readings as these is no more strange than that he should forbid the use of some besotting narcotic, dreary in its effects and depressing in its consequences. Perhaps this testator had recognised in his own case some of the dire results of this dyspeptic literature. Still, with all its faults, its story was the world. It spoke of man in his works and ways with other men, how he bought and sold, made peace or war, built up or threw down; of the virtues he held high, of the vices he reprobated; what were the views he extended to the world at large, and what were the hopes that he cherished for those who were to come after him. Even through the labyrinth of German involution glimpses of these might be had; and why should

not his heir be permitted to look at life, albeit through the smoked glass of his native language?

One of our most brilliant essayists, and most accomplished thinkers, has declared that he regards a number of the 'Times' as the last report of what the world has achieved of progress; and I thoroughly agree with him. That broadsheet is the morning's "return" of Humanity, not alone recounting what it has accomplished in the preceding twenty-four hours, but how it feels after it. You have not alone the bulletin of the great battle the world is fighting, but you have an authentic report of the effective state of humanity on the next morning.

Take the most thorough man of the world of your acquaintance—the man most perfectly versed in what goes on in life, not in one class or section of society, but throughout all ranks and conditions of men—who knows where and for what the world is fighting in this quarter or in that—how it builds its ships—what it pays for gold—how it tills its fields, smelts its metals, cooks its food, and writes its novels—and I ask you, what would he be without his newspaper? By what possible machinery could he learn, as he sits at his breakfast, the last news from Shanghai, and the last ballet at Paris—the state of the funds at San Francisco—the winner at Newmarket—the pantomime at the Olympic—the encyclical

of the Pope? Do not reply to me with a *Cui bono?*

For I say that it is with the actual passing, daily-arising incidents of life a man ought to be thoroughly acquainted, bringing to their consideration all the aid his reading and reflection can supply, so that he neither fall into a dogged incredulity on one side, or a fatal facility or belief on the other. In an age so wildly speculative as the present—eager to inquire, and not over given to scruple—such men as these are invaluable to society, and a whole corps of college professors would be less effective in dispelling error or asserting truth than these people trained in all the dialectics of the daily press.

If the testator, in the case before us—for I return to him now—was simply moved by a desire to conceal from his heir the late events occurring in Germany, I own a plea might without great difficulty be advanced in his behalf. It would be hard to condemn him if he wished to shroud in obscurity the ignominious subserviency of Austria, and the insolent pretension of her ancient rival Prussia. The lamentable part assigned to the Empire in the Danish conflict might well suggest to an officer in the Imperial service such an intention. Austrian wars have not been remarkable for success, but they have always been distinguished for the splendid valour of the

troops, and the noble devotion of men who, however worsted, never regarded defeat as overthrow. In the terrible battles of the first Empire, this character of their courage displayed itself on every field. So also was it conspicuous in the last Lombard campaign. What an indignity, then, for such soldiers to be arrayed against the greatly inferior numbers of a nation unused to war—to a brave handful of men ready to sell their lives rather than surrender their native soil to the foot of the invader! The white-coated legions of the Empire had no need to inscribe Duppel or the Danewerke on their ensigns. And what inglorious companionship was that in which they found themselves! Dupes of M. Bismarck! I am not in the least surprised that an Austrian officer might desire to obliterate any memory of these things; but it is not so easily done. A codicil enjoining the condition that his heir should become a Trappist might possibly succeed; I know of nothing else.

I have to speak with diffidence as to how I should feel in any new or untried situation in life: I cannot, therefore, say what my feelings might be if I were to awake and discover that somebody had bequeathed to me something. I can no more answer for my conduct, than could the gentleman on being asked what he should do if he met a white bear.

But so far as I can understand my own nature, I should reject a legacy coupled with such a condition as this. Without my newspaper, life would narrow itself to the small limits of my personal experiences, and humanity be compressed into the ten or fifteen people I mix with. Now I refuse to accept this. I have not a sixpence in consols, but I want to know how they stand. I was never—I never in all likelihood shall be—in Japan; but I have an intense curiosity to know what our troops did at Yokohama. I deplore the people who suffered by that railroad smash; and I sympathise with the newly-married couple so beautifully depicted in the 'Illustrated,' as they drove off in a chaise and four, the bald old gent at the hall door waving them a last adieu. I like the letters of the correspondents, with their little grievances about unpunctual trains, or some unwarrantable omissions in the Liturgy. I even like the people who chronicle the rainfall, and record little facts about the mildness of the season.

As for the advertisements, I regard them as the glass and mirror of the age. Show me but one page of the "Wants" of any country, and I engage myself to give a sketch of the current civilisation of the period. What glimpses of rare interiors do we gain by these brief paragraphs! How full of suggestiveness and of story are they! Think of the social

circle at Clapham that advertise for a lodger who has a good tenor voice, and would appreciate the domestic life of a retired family devoted to music and the fine arts! . Imagine the more exalted propriety of those who want "a footman in a serious family, where there are means of grace, and a kitchen-maid kept"! Here it is a shooting-box to be disposed of; here a widow in affluent circumstances announces her intention to re-marry; here a scientific naturalist professes his readiness to exchange bugs or caterpillars with another devotee; and here a more practical physiologist wants from three to four dozen lively rats for his bull-terrier. Are not these life-etchings? Do you want anything more plain or palpable to tell you where and how we live?

Now, I neither want shooting-box, beetles, rats, or widow, but I am not to be cut off from my sympathies with the people who do. On the contrary, in the very proportion that all these things do not enter into my requirements, do I desire to know who and what are the people who need them, why they need them, and what they do with them when they get them. Perhaps my nature may have its excess of this fellow-feeling—I cannot say; but I know I'd give more than I should like to say to be able to pass an evening with the musical circle, or even to have the privilege of a few sweet moments with the seri-

ous family. I am human to the very tips of my fingers, and there is not a mood in humanity without its interest for me. If, therefore, some admirer of these O'Dowderies, on learning that I am not a sleeping partner in 'Baring's, or a large shareholder in the Great Western, should desire to express his satisfaction in a testamentary form, let him not couple his bequest with such a condition as I have recorded. I may possibly be able to "rub on" without my legacy, but I couldn't exist without my 'Times.'

THE ENGLISH INQUISITION.

“MY Lord,” said an eminent Irish counsel, some forty-odd years ago, “if there be any principle embalmed in the glorious constitution of this realm—if there is any right which we claim distinctively as British—it is contained in those noble words, the strongholds against tyranny, the refuge against oppression, ‘*Nemo me impune lacessit*’—No man is bound to criminate himself.”

Now, whether the distinguished authority was perfectly correct in his translation, is not the question I desire to raise here. I simply desire to ask if the great privilege of which we are told we should be so proud avail us much, or indeed avail us anything at all, in presence of the system of cross-examination that is now practised in our law-courts.

Much has been said and written about the licence of the Press—and unquestionably there is a certain

tyranny in the expression of opinion so haughtily delivered, so severely conveyed, as we occasionally see it—but what is the most slashing leader, what the most cutting review, to that *mauvais quart d'heure* a man passes in the witness-box when the examining counsel desires to disparage his veracity?

You are sued in some trifling action. It is a question of some garden-seeds or a hearth-rug, the payment for which, for reasons of your own, you dispute. You believe your case a good one; and though the defence may prove more costly than a submission to the demand, your sense of self-respect requires resistance, and you make it.

Now, I am willing to believe that from your earliest years you have been trained to habits of virtue and order; that, good as a child, you grew better as a youth, and became best as a man; that, so circumspect had you been over your conduct through life, it would be next to impossible to find an instance in which your behaviour could have been altered for the better;—in a word, that you have ever shown yourself equally zealous in the pursuit of virtue as strong in resisting every access of temptation. Get up now into the witness-box, and see what that eminent counsel will make you. Sit under him for five-and-forty minutes, and tell me if five-and-twenty years will erase the memory of

the miseries you endured, the insinuations you could not reply to, the insults you were not permitted to resent?

In the first place, you are presented to the world of a crowded court as a species of human target, a mark which Serjeant Buzfuz is to fire at as long as he likes, with his own ammunition, and at his own range. He may be as obtuse, as stupid, as wrong-headed, and as blundering as the crier of the court; he may mistake his facts, misstate his brief: but there is one thing he will never forget—that you are there for his own especial torture of you, and that, whether he worried you “for plaintiff” or “defendant,” out of that box you don’t come till he has blackened your character and defamed your reputation, and sent you back to your home outraged, injured, and insulted.

Is there a bishop, arch or simple, on the bench, who in his school-days, or his college-days, or in his after life as tutor, either by word or deed, by something he uttered, something he wrote, some advice he gave, or some advice he did not give, has not in some shape or other done “that thing he ought not to have done,” or left undone that which he ought? Is it not very possible that this same error, of whatever kind it may have been, has acted upon his nature either as warning or corrective? Is

it not likely that much of his conduct through life has been traced with reference to experiences, bought dearly, perhaps, and that he has shaped his course with the knowledge of these shoals and quicksands which once had threatened him with shipwreck? I take it there must be men amongst us who have learned something from their own errors, and whose example is not the less striking that their manhood is in strong contrast with their youth. I take it that the number of those who could say, I have nothing to secrete, nothing to recant, nothing to unsay, nothing to undo, must be small; and I am strongly disposed to believe that the influence of the very best men would be seriously prejudiced if a perpetual reference were to be made to some circumstances or opinions, or some accidents of their early lives.

Cross-examination rejects all this reserve, and revels in whatever shall display the man in the witness-box as something totally unlike the character he now wears before the world.

Once ingeniously place him in contrast with himself, and he is stamped as a hypocrite; and there is not a man on the jury who will listen to him with any respect.

"I will now ask the witness, my Lord, if the Poem which I hold in my hand, and from which I purpose to read some extracts, was not written by

himself. Take that book, sir, and say are these lines yours?"

"My Lord, when I wrote that——"

"Answer my question, sir. Are you the author of this production?"

"My Lord, I humbly entreat your Lordship's protection, and I desire to know if I am bound to answer this question?"

The Court blandly, almost compassionately, assures him that if he deems any admissions he may make will have the effect of incriminating him, he is not bound to reply; on which the examining counsel, with the leer triumphant towards the jury-box, rejoins, "I will now repeat my question, and the witness will use the discretion which his Lordship informs him is his privilege."

"I was a youth of nineteen, my Lord, when I wrote those verses!" stammers out the confused and almost overwhelmed witness, turning with a human instinct to the one living creature that seems to look pitifully on his sufferings.

"Address yourself to me, sir," shouts out Buzfuz, "and tell me if it was at this same irresponsible period of your life you made the acquaintance of Matilda Gubbins?"

"She was children's governess in my uncle's family," stammers out the blushing martyr, who has

a wife and a mother-in-law in court, and whose present miseries pale before the thought of another inquisition that awaits him.

"Gentlemen of the jury," cries Buzfuz, in a voice like that of an avenging angel, "I call upon you to take note of the reply the witness has just returned to my question—a reply of which I hesitate to marvel more at its evasion than at its outrageous effrontery. Instead of a simple yes or no to my question, he tells you that his unhappy victim was in a humble position—a poor, perhaps friendless girl."

"Really, brother Buzfuz," interposes the judge, "I must stop this line of cross-examination. It is totally irrelevant to the matter before us."

"My Lord, it is essential to my case to show that this man is not worthy of credit. He comes here to-day to resist the just demand of a poor and industrious tradesman, and on the faith of his own words to deny the contract that subsisted between them; but before he leaves that box the jury shall see what credence they will accord to one whose whole life has been a tissue of treachery, evasion, and falsehood. My instructions, my Lord, extend to the period of his school-days, of which I now purpose to ask him some questions."

It is in vain for the Court to declare that the witness need not reply to this, that, and the other. We

all of us know what effect is produced by a man's refusing to answer some home question, the reply to which we ourselves fancy to be the easiest of all imaginable things, so that when the moment has arrived that the counsel can say, You may go down, sir! he says it with a look, voice, and emphasis that seem to consign the unhappy victim to a depth from which he is never more to emerge for the remainder of his life.

Now, if these be sore trials to a man, what are they when a woman is the victim? what are they when the vaguest insinuation swells to the magnitude of an insult, and an imputed possibility becomes a grave outrage?

We boast about liberty—we rant about our house being our castle—and we repeat the Pittite about that sanctuary where “the rain may enter, and the wind enter, but the King cannot enter;” and yet we endure a serfdom ten thousand times more degrading than all the perquisitions of a police, and all the searchings of a *gendarmerie*.

While I write, I read that a verdict, with one thousand pounds damages, has been obtained against a well-known journal for having employed in a criticism the same expressions of disparagement the Attorney-General had used in court: the lawyer being, it is alleged, privileged, the critic is held a defamer!

THRIFT.

I KNOW of nothing so continuously, so pertinaciously overpraised in this world as thrift; nor do I believe that human selfishness ever took on a mask of more consummate hypocrisy than in this same laudation. When I lecture the labouring man on the merits of economy—when I write my little book to show him how life can be maintained on infinitesimal fragments of food, and that homœopathy can apply to diet as well as to physic—my secret motive is often this: to prevent the same man becoming a burden to me, and a charge to the rates, if sickness should overtake or idleness fall upon him. I tell him how he may eke out life on half rations, because the day might come in which he would address himself to me for a meal.

I know there are numbers who do not so act or think, and who really feel for and compassionate the

poor; but even they are prone to suggest sacrifices not one of which they would be capable of making, and to instil precepts of self-denial of whose cost they have not the faintest idea.

First of all, thrift is not every man's gift. It is as much an idiosyncrasy as a taste for drawing or an ear for music. There are people in the world whom no amount of teaching would enable to draw a pig or play a polka. You might hammer at these till doomsday without success. Whatever be the cerebral development that confers the quality, they are deficient in it. To harangue such men as these on economy, is like arguing with a deaf man to induce him to dance in time, or insisting on the blind observing the laws of perspective. The quality that should supply the gift is not there; like St Cecilia's angel, *Ils n'ont pas de quoi*.

In this universal appeal, therefore, to thriftiness, we are as unjust as if we were to enjoin that all men should be painters, statuaries, or poets. There are even races in which the gift is a very rare endowment, and the man who possesses it an exceptional being. The whole Celtic family are deficient in thrift. There is a mingled recklessness and hopefulness—a dash of devil-may-care with self-confidence, that renders them wasteful. They are spendthrift partly out of a certain impulsiveness that drives them to attract

notice ; partly out of the general kindness which loves to disseminate pleasure, and partly because they are intensely sensational ; and next to the luxury of affluence is the struggle with a positive difficulty. The Irishman is a strong instance of what I mean. To attempt to make him provident is to try to make the Ethiopian change his skin. You are, in fact, about to do something that nature never intended—never, in her most fanciful mood, so much as speculated on.

Thrift sits very ill on certain natures. If a man's whole system of life is not penetrated with the motive, his attempt to be thrifty will be a failure—not impossibly something worse than a failure. Let me give an instance from my own experience.

A good many years ago, when I was better off in worldly wealth and in spirits than it is likely I shall ever be again, a great man, who was gracious enough to take an interest in me, tendered me some very excellent advice on the score of my wasteful and extravagant mode of life. He pointed out to me how I kept too many horses, gave too many dinners, played high points at whist, and in general indulged in habits totally unsuited to any but men of large means. He brought the matter so home to me by a reference to himself and his own expenditure—he being, as I have said, a “Personage”—that I could

not but feel the application. I pondered over all he said, particularly one point, on which he laid an unusual stress. "Begin your reformation," said he, "by small economies. You have not an idea how insensibly the desire to extend them will grow on you. Start with something you can do very well without, and you will be astonished to find how many things you now regard as necessities will drop into that category."

It was not so easy as he said, however, to find that which I could so well dispense with. I liked so many things, and found them all so pleasant! At last I hit upon one; and it is noteworthy that, when a man takes to retrenchment, the first thing he should cut down should be his liberality.

One of my morning pastimes at the time I speak of was to practise pistol-shooting at a gallery in a remote suburb of the city where I lived. It was a pretty spot, with a nice garden, and resorted to by a number of idle amusing fellows, who usually divided their days with a due reference to making them as pleasant as may be. Here we shot, gossiped, betted, and laughed away the forenoon; and though certainly the pastime might be fairly called a superfluity, I had not the heart to abandon it. My conscience, however, urged me to some measure of reduction; and so, I bethought me, I might begin

my retrenchment advantageously by cutting off the daily franc I gave a poor devil who used to hold my pony while I was in the gallery.

I made a rough calculation of the pounds per annum this "extravagance" cost me ;—how ready one's mental arithmetic becomes at such a moment ! It was a matter of, I think I made it, fourteen pounds a-year I was squandering in this wasteful fashion. I will begin with this to-morrow, thought I. It is a good commencement, and I know of nothing which could less intrench upon my own enjoyments.

When I rode up the next day to the gallery, therefore, I declined the poor fellow's services ; and, dismounting, I fastened the bridle of my cob to the hook of the window-shutters, those outside "jalousies" we see in all foreign houses. The poor man's look of dismay, his air of half-reproachful misery, went to my heart ; but my great friend had told me to prepare myself for sacrifices. "Your first steps," said he, "will be very painful, now and then they will push you to the very verge of endurance ; but you must summon courage to resist, you must go on." And, like one proud of a victory over himself, I stepped boldly on and entered the garden. Was it the consciousness of having done something noble in self-denial that steadied my eye and nerved my hand ? Perhaps so. At all events, my first

shot struck the very centre, and itself proclaimed the victory by ringing a bell attached to the back of the target, but so loudly and uproariously that my pony, startled by the uproar, broke away, carrying with him window-frame, "jalousie," and all together, the repairs amounting to a sum of eighty-seven francs in money, and more ridicule than I am able to set down in a "cash valuation."

This was my first, and, shall I own it? my last attempt at economy. There are temperaments which thrift disagrees with, just as there are constitutions which cannot take opium, or digitalis, or a score of other medicaments that others profit by. Mine, I say it in all humility, is one of them. The agent that acts so favourably with others goes wrong with *me*. Something or other has been omitted in my temperament, or something has been mixed up with it that ought not to have been there. I cannot tell which. Whatever it be, it renders me incapable of practising that sage and well-regulated economy by which other men secure themselves against difficulties, and "show a surplus" in their annual balance-sheet.

Just as there are men most eager to become fox-hunters, but who never can sit a fence, or fellows dying to be yachtsmen, but who cannot conquer sea-sickness, I have a most ardent desire to be thrifty

impressed upon me, I own, by that stern condition which is said to be beyond all law. I plot thrift, I dream thrift, I speculate on fifty different ways by which I may reduce the estimates ; but, do what I may, it invariably ends in failure. It's always the story of the pony and the window-shutter over again ; and so assured have I become, by long and bitter experience, of my incapacity, that whenever I do anything particularly stingy, I have that sensation of mingled vanity and nervousness that so often is felt as the prelude to an outburst of reckless extravagance. I feel myself a spendthrift, and I almost revel in the sense of a thoughtless munificence.

The most striking feature about excessive thrift is its uselessness. Morning does not follow night by a more certain law than does extravagance succeed saving. Pass your whole life in laying up farthings or saving candle-ends, and your son or your nephew, or whoever it be inherits from you, will take care to waste in a week what cost you years to accumulate. Every lesson of your life will be read by him backwards, and all that your dreary existence will have taught him will be warnings against your philosophy.

This thrift tendency would be comparatively harmless if the individual practising it were satisfied with the approval of his own conscience, and the not less pleasant consequences of his increasing store ;

but this is what he is not—nor can he be. He insists on going about the world recounting all the little shabby and miserable expedients by which he saves money, and telling all the petty shifts he is put to to preserve existence; and in this way he poisons the life of other men who, poorer than himself, are driven to regard themselves as reckless spendthrifts. My pint of sherry becomes a shameless extravagance the moment I bethink me of my neighbour, who could buy me, and all belonging to me, off the face of the earth, sitting down to his table-beer and saying that he cannot afford better. I may inveigh against his meanness, call him by every hard name I can remember, invest him with every bad quality I can think of, but the victory is his, and my dry Amontillado will have got a bitter that never belonged to the vintage, and Cleopatra and her pearl will occur to me every time that I touch the decanter.

Now I deny his right to do this. Let him muddy his own well if he likes, but let him not come and throw stones into mine.

A life passed in incessant savings and perpetual self-denials seems to me as logical a mistake as though a man should persist throughout his whole existence in training for a match that was never to come off. I see a good deal of privation in this, and I cannot see the profit.

A PERSONAL-PARLIAMENTARY.

“MESSRS SHUFFELL & SHIFT present their respectful compliments to Mr O’Dowd, and beg to learn if he be disposed—as some time since he informed them he was—to offer himself for a seat in Parliament. S. & S. have now several borough and two county representations on their list, and are hopeful that neither the pecuniary considerations nor the political obligations will be found any obstacle to Mr O’Dowd’s most natural ambition. An early reply is requested, as a large number of applicants is already in the field.”

I received this despatch as I was looking over my fishing-tackle, thinking of hooking something very different from an Under-Secretaryship, or even the berth of Assistant-Commissioner to somebody’s commission. I replied at once, intimating that I had a wide conscience and a narrow purse; that my breast

was charged with noble aspirations, but I was afraid I had overdrawn my banker. If, then, Messrs S. & S. could hit upon a pure-minded constituency desirous to distinguish themselves in a corrupt age by single-mindedness and devotion, and eager to send into the House a man as unshackled by pledges as he was unstained by bribery, to let me have their address, and they should have mine.

To this came these words, marked "Private"—

"DEAR O'DOWD,—No bosh. Can you come down with fifteen hundred ready? Ballot, manhood suffrage, no Church, no entail, no anything after ten years.—Yours ever, MALACHI SHUFFELL"

My reply was—"Money tight, convictions easy, hopes looking up;" and on this we arranged a meeting at Brussels.

Punctual to his appointment, Shuffell arrived an hour after myself. He had but a day to give me, but a day is a long space when two men understand each other, and thoroughly take in, each the intentions of the other. He had brought four specimen boroughs for my inspection. They were the only things going cheap at the moment, for, as he said, "There's a great run on the House now. They all want to get in."

Nothing could be more succinct or businesslike than his list. There was first the name of the place, in another column the number of the electors, in a third "available voters," in a fourth general hints for canvass; as thus—"Swampleigh, with 682. The Baptist section, and Hoddes the saddler, Maccles of the Fox and Goose, and Tom Groves of the Post-Office. Hints—Reduced taxation, overthrow of the Irish Church, subsidy to Congregational religionists, no Sunday traffic, no beerhouses, a general nothingness, and great economy."

"Not the thing for you, Mr O'D.," said he; "there is no expansiveness here—nothing for the man who 'glories in the name of Briton.' This is better—Comberton, voters 1004; 460 available by various arguments. Of this borough there are annually from forty to fifty drafted into the public service. They like the Revenue, and many are gaugers. They are convivial, Radical, and religious, but above all bigotry in each, and are really devoted to providing for their families, and have always upheld the reputation of the town.

"This is next: Inshakerrigan—Tenant-right, free passage to America, no spirit-duties, no Established Church, no county rates, the poor on the Consolidated Fund."

The last was a Welsh borough, Mnddllmwrllm;

but as the candidate would be called on to pronounce the name, I gave it up at once.

"Is there nothing Conservative?" asked I, for I had several notes in my desk against growing Radicalism, the wisdom of our ancestors, and time-honoured institutions.

After a brief pause, he replied, "Yes, there is Ditchley-le-Moors; but it's costly—very costly: we always keep it for one of the speechless younger sons of a great house.

"You must canvass Ditchley," said he, "in an earl's carriage, and send your orders to the tradespeople by one of the noble lord's flunkys. They have always had that respect paid them, and they like it. Do you happen to know a lord who could spare you his equipage for a week or ten days?"

I shook my head.

"Let us not think of Ditchley," continued he; "besides, you'd find it immensely hard to speak on that side. They all want England to be great, powerful, and Protestant, but with increased armaments and diminished expenditure. 'Bully Europe, and cut down the Income-tax!' is the cry. The Church, too, is to be upheld in all its strength, uniformity insisted on, and the right of private judgment maintained—a difficulty in its way; and in the distance a Reform Bill, opening the franchise

to every man with a pair of black trousers. Can you do this?"

"Scarcely."

"I thought not. There's no such easy tune on the political fiddle as the Radical jig, 'Down with all o' them.' 'Am I to tell the vast and intelligent assembly I see before me this evening—an assembly that represents the skill, the ability, the industry, ay, and the integrity of this great nation—that they are deemed too ignorant, too uneducated, too irresponsible, and too dangerous, to be intrusted with civil rights? Is it because by the daily exercise of those qualities which have made England the workshop of the world, that you are to be excluded from any share in the Government whose enactments no men are more vitally interested in than yourselves?"

"There's the key-note—go on now."

I arose, threw back my coat from my chest, and continued: "It is by labour that life is dignified, and which of us is not proud to be a labourer? If the indolent aristocrat who refuses to let us share in the rewards and prizes of the State were but to look back, he would find that his own rights to the very pre-eminence he asserts were founded on labour, and that the coronet on his brow was picked up in the mill or the factory, the counting-house or the law-court. He would learn that toil, which disciplines the heart,

elevates the man, and that production is to humanity what creation is to nature."

"No, no; that won't do. None of that. Keep to the labourer—you were good there."

"You are perhaps too narrow-minded for the exercise of the franchise! I wish the men who say this would come down with me to your Mechanics' Institute. I wish they would enter into discussion with some of those intelligent men I met there not more than an hour since. I should like to see their effeminate intellects brought face to face with those great male organisations."

"That's bad; male is Frenchified; say manly."

"You mustn't interrupt," said I; "how the devil am I to keep up the steam if you're always 'banking' my fire? I would like, I say, to see these club-nurtured creatures of self-indulgence and indolence confronted for once with the stupendous vigour of our manufacturing population, and compel them to argue out the great question between them in their proper persons. How do we legislate for the working man? I ask; is it with reference to himself, to his wants, his habits, his hopes, or his instincts? or is it simply by a respect for the convenience, the security, and the wealth of him who employs him? If we change an order in the Court of Bankruptcy, we send out a commission to supply us with information

to search out every detail and particle that may serve to guide us in our judgment, and especially are we concerned to know that no servant of the State should be damaged in his fortune without being duly indemnified ; but how do we deal with *you* ? We decree the hours you shall labour, and the hours you shall rest ; we settle the periods of your toil as though they were the enactments of a penal code ; and when the day of repose arrives, we arrest your pleasures, we close to you the few sources of recreation moderate means could compass ; we forbid the little excursions that health almost necessitates ; and we tell you to sit down and brood over the evil destiny that has made you Englishmen and mechanics !

“ Do they like Latin ? ”

“ No ; Latin is not quoted in a borough ; it will do in the counties and the metropolitan seats, where men cheer it that they may seem to understand it.”

“ It’s a pity : there’s nothing rounds off a speech like something with *hominum* in it.”

“ Keep it for the House ; it’s always good there.”

“ And do you really think I shall get there ? ”

“ Your return is certain.—Let us order dinner.”

“ Wait a moment,” said I, “ what about a petition ? They sometimes try to smash one’s election that way.”

"A petition," said he, with a sort of contemptuous irritation in his tone, "never succeeds, but against a fellow with some small mean scruple,—some one who hesitates, some one who won't go in at once and say, Here I am, ready to swear: what shall it be? Bribe? never bribed. Treated? never treated. Promise? never promised. I stand here perfectly unassailable on the score of all corrupt influence, my first and last declaration to the electors being, 'Gentlemen, if you really desire an independent representative—if you are satisfied to send into Parliament a man unpledged and unfettered, and who is no more capable of endeavouring to exert an unfair influence over you than he is of submitting to a similar bondage to himself, I shall be proud to serve you; but if the price of my seat were to be one shilling disbursed in corruption, I would refuse it.'"

"Will a committee believe all this?"

"Not a word of it, but they'll have to swallow it all the same. Nobody can contradict me but myself; let them try and make me, that's all."

"I'm ready for dinner now," said I, "and with a capital appetite."

A DREAM.

I FELL asleep over the Archbishop of York's Charge, and I dreamed a dream! I suppose that the doctor in Mr Wilkie Collins's story of 'Armada' could, on interrogating me, easily find a clue to each successive portion of my vision, and plainly demonstrate that there was nothing creative in my imaginings—that they were, in fact, mere reproductions of ideas which had once before impinged upon my brain.

Now, whoever glances over the broad sheet of the 'Times'—no matter how cursorily or passingly—will in all likelihood have obtained a "reason fair" for a wide discursiveness in his after thoughts, and the Manx physician would have very little difficulty in tracing any consecutive train of ideas to something between the Australian clipper in the first page and the Church Extension Report in the last.

At all events, I dropped off asleep, my mind

imbued with the solemn picture of York Cathedral, its stillness broken by but one deep-toned voice, so far off in a shadowy aisle as to sound like a mere echoed thunder in a mountain-gorge; and mixed up with this, at minute peals, as it were, came the measured boom of loud artillery.

Mr Collins's doctor would immediately ask if I had not recently been reading the account of the ordnance experiments at Shoeburyness; and I have but to say it is perfectly possible I may, though I can't positively affirm it. My dream was a very confused affair; and all I can pick out of its scattered fragments was, that while standing under the lofty groinings of a stately Gothic cathedral, some one dressed in a cassock, but with a horse-artillery helmet on his head, was explaining to my ignorance the complicated mechanism of an enormous gun. It was, as he informed me, the most perfect piece of casting that had ever come out of a mould; and really, for smoothness, uniformity, solidity, and lustre, it was a marvel to look at. All its mounting, too, was costly and complete; and it was as perfect and as finished as wood and brass could make it.

"This," said he, "is the great cannon of the Established Church, forged at the time of the Reformation out of the scrap-iron of the Church of

Rome. It has been well tempered and hammered since that, and is now considered to be the most perfect gun in Christendom. Its range might," he added, "be set down as unlimited; at least it had been known to throw a shell as far as New Zealand; and a very ordinary day's practice was the coast of Africa, or the islands in the South Pacific." He admitted that now and then accidents did occur from diversity of opinion as to the charge, and the length of the time-fuzes—some shells exploding too soon (they were invented by a certain Colenso), others never going off at all; in fact, as he said, we are all agreed about the gun itself; it is the ammunition that we are disposed to differ on.

"And what do you fire at?" asked I.

"Human wickedness," replied he, "in every shade: whatever corrupts, degrades, and debases man; all that unfits him for a better state and a higher destiny. At these we aim. You should be here," cried he, enthusiastically, "at one of our practising days: such a deafening report, such smoke, such a tremor in the ground as follow the discharge, never were witnessed before."

"And do you always hit the mark?" asked I.

"Well, not always," said he, hesitatingly; "we now and then go short—occasionally to one side, and sometimes clean over it. When we set up the

target some thousand miles away—at the North Pole, for instance—a miss doesn't signify so much; there's no one there to record it, and so we conclude we have made a bull's eye; but when we fire at short range it is disagreeable to fail."

"After all," said I, "with such a costly piece of ordnance and such practised gunners, I don't wonder if the public look for very perfect practice."

"As I told you before," said he, "we are not agreed as to the ammunition; some are for compact loading, and would take a long careful aim; others say, Load with grape—fire away right and left, and you'll hit something at last: and disputes have now got so far that each puts in pretty nigh what he likes; and, worse still, some have been known to take a shot at a comrade when he accidentally exposed himself outside the marking hillock."

"This was shameful!" exclaimed I.

"Unhappy, certainly," he replied; "but for all that it's a magnificent gun, and costs the country some millions, too, to keep it in order. There's to be a meeting in a few days now, to determine, if possible, on one kind of charge, not so much for the sake of its efficiency as a projectile, but that it should be easily fired, and that every man could use it. If we could hit upon that," said he, "it would be a great blessing, and mainly promote that

good feeling and brotherhood amongst us that the outside world expects to see in us. I must leave you now," said he, pointing to a MS. labelled 'Episcopal Charge;' "the bishop is waiting for the wadding, and it is his turn to fire;" and so he went.

I cannot give any shape or form to my dreamings after this—short fitful glimpses I had of dumpy little men in lawn sleeves running wildly to and fro—some with ramrods, some with crosiers. There was much confusion, much noise, and much smoke. I remember no more. When I awoke—taking up as well as I could the fragments of my vision—I endeavoured to lay the pieces together into something consistent. The task was not easy. Sir William Armstrong *would* come into the Chapter-House, and there was no means of keeping Messrs Whitworth and Blakely out of the Thirty-nine Articles. By a great effort of concentration, however, I fixed one object to the exclusion of the other, and got my eye steadily bent upon the bishops. Is it true, asked I of myself, as my dream seemed to indicate, that these men, admirably trained and skilled as they were, do not hit the mark they aim at, and that a large proportion of their fire is wide and desultory? And if so, why so?

I do not dare to approach the higher view of the

question, but, simply regarding the matter as one affecting the civilisation of the nation, why is the Church so inoperative? why is it so ineffectual in the correction of those vices which, by frequency alone, are sufficient to temper the national disposition, and render a people habitually brutalised and coarse? Why, in one word, is all the expensive organisation we have provided to propagate virtue and conquer vice something not very far from a failure? And why do we occasionally find that the correction of a national disgrace is more referable to that vague and undefined sentiment we call public opinion than to the distinct operation of the Church? Take the case of duelling. If this practice has entirely, or all but entirely, been banished from amongst us, to what or to whom do we owe it? Certainly not to the bishops. The same may be said of the habit of profane swearing. There was a time that men of breeding garnished all they said with oaths, and persons of education felt it no disgrace to mingle through their talk expressions the coarsest and most irreverent. This has gone, entirely gone. The fast man of the novel or the "Blood" of the comedy no longer offends good taste by such excesses. And who made this reformation? The same enlightened public opinion that suppressed the duel, enlightened through the influence of an able press, quick to

mark and to record the advanced civilisation of the nation. With whom then the fault? With the teachers or the scholars? Are the former unsuccessful because they are unwilling to deal with vice save by the weapons of the Church? or are the latter deaf to all appeals save such as come coupled with what may stimulate self-interest or flatter self-love? Preaching certainly never put down duelling, but telling men that if they fought they would be ill looked on and shunned, excluded from trust, cut off from employment. These were arguments that had their weight. So, too, of the habit of using oaths. "Swear not at all" rang out from the pulpit, and men heeded it not; but when they were told it was low-bred, was vulgar, that lords-in-waiting rarely swore, and maids of honour almost never, they began to feel it was the right thing to weed their speech of expletives, and leave curses to the cabmen.

The crusade is now against intemperance, and I am fully convinced that to be successful it must be shown that gentlemen do not get drunk. Once you convince M'Guppy that my Lord Tomnoddy never exceeds three or four glasses of sherry, his snob nature imbibes a virtue through the pores of his vulgarity, and he becomes temperate because it is genteel.

What hypocrisy renders to virtue Snobbery yields

to good manners. It is an unsound homage, if you will, but it is still homage, and it would be ill policy to ignore or to reject it.

It takes a long time for the higher graces that adorn a people to filter down to the lower strata of society, but we may see the process going on any day amongst us. Civilisation is now permeating masses in England whose compact insensibility would at one time have seemed to defy all transit. Why should not the Church aid this process, even by an assistance not enjoined by the rubric? Good taste is, I am aware, not the great standard to appeal to; but why not take it as a *mezzo termine*? A people brutalised by low habits and corrupt ways are not very accessible to scriptural admonition. Why not elevate them out of this, and raise them to a level in which higher and nobler appeals will be listened to? Washing a man's hands may not give him an appetite for his dinner, but it will certainly better prepare him to enjoy his meal.

The medieval monks recovered all the prestige that the Church had lost, by devoting themselves to the arts which advance civilisation; and they threw off, besides, the reproach that rash men had been too prone to make, as to priests being essentially lazy and indolent, doing little for themselves, and even less for their neighbours.

The taunt ceased to apply when men saw that these same monks knew more of art, more of literature, were better agriculturists, better craftsmen than all the laity, and that, when the work of life went busily on, with its wars and disputes, its toils, its ambitions, and its jarrings, it was no small privilege to have a class who stood aloof from these passing interests, and whose function it was to link past and future so together, that whatever men had done in bygone days for the betterment of their fellows should not be lost or forgotten, but held as a precious treasure to be transmitted to all posterity.

Might not the lesson they then gave the world be worth remembering now?

ON ELECTIONEERING.

I HAVE often "ambitioned the acquaintance," to employ a French formulary for what I do not desire to affirm with great positiveness, of those people who, from conscientious motives, remit five or fifty pounds to the Chancellor of the Exchequer as a relief to the cravings of an irritable integrity. I do not mean to say that I have any strong desire to become their intimate or their associate. I feel myself too immeasurably their inferior for such a wish to be possible; but in my pursuit of strange humanities I would really be glad to see these people—to mark their lineaments, hear their words, and ponder over their general characteristics.

In the same way, but in a diminished degree, I should like to meet the man who writes these letters that we daily read to the constituency of this county or that borough, duly setting forth what the candi-

date's principles are, whether implied in the formula—we are very well as we are—we might be better—or, we can't be worse.

That it is one individual man writes these marvellous compositions, is a fact so clear and palpable it requires no demonstration. There is a charming simplicity in the style, with that small dash of complication which is the necessary ingredient of a certain evasiveness. Let the candidate be ever so wary and ever so wise, his *pronunciamento* must still be, in a great measure, a leap in the dark. There are things will be inquired of him which he cannot possibly answer, and pledges exacted which, if he be only true to his word, will reduce him to an amount of insignificance positively pitiable. To meet these great difficulties, his address must be written by one long conversant with human frailty as displayed in the electoral system of this great country. He must, in fact, apply to that great genius who knows how to promise without making performance necessary—who can so jostle one set of ideas against another, so balance something here by something there, so adjust this by redressing that—that the British constitution may be made to resemble one of those phrenological heads, in which every quality is arrested in its action by some antagonistic development, and all that is good

or bad in the individual finds its complement in something which makes it a matter of perfect indifference that it was there at all.

To be able to satisfy a modern constituency, a man very soon learns, is a downright impossibility. The cry of Give, give, can scarcely be answered by one who, to be able to give, must sit beside men who have responsibilities as well as salaries. The candidate therefore is driven either to accept pledges which make his position in the House totally valueless, or he must practise some game of tricky evasiveness that may enable him to talk one way and vote another.

Now, in the old days of bribery and corruption—I do not mean the pre-Sarumite days, but in that more recent period preceding our last enactments against the buying of votes—men usually went down to the country amply stocked with five-pound notes. Canvass and corruption became convertible terms, and the voter regarded the franchise as a privilege that could at will be demanded in gold. The candidate probably approached the electors with a feeling that a considerable number of them had no other interest in the contest than their own benefit. Some, of course, took a more elevated view, and preferred being bribed by the men with whose political leanings they concurred, and liked to have their pockets filled, and

what they called their "principles" represented. Treating was freely practised, and the acute faculties of the electoral mind were perfectionated by a course of festivities which assuredly as little contributed to the dignity of the individual as to his powers of correct appreciation.

The constituency that cared for five-pound notes were for the most part easily dealt with. A sort of Parliamentary transparency was exhibited as to measures. Things were promised, assurances given, pledges made as to this or that other; but the great fact remained palpable, that the man to conciliate the voters should be he who could most certainly provide them with material guarantees of his goodwill.

To secure freedom of election was naturally a great object with the Legislature—to offer as many obstacles as possible to all corruption was a very legitimate ambition—and so they determined that there should be no bribery, no coercion, no treating, no unfair interference.

The candidate, in consequence, approached his constituency no longer with his purse. The law said, You shall not bribe; you shall only promise—cajole—prevaricate. You shall qualify a concession to this by some restriction on that—you shall declare yourself in favour of fifty things, in the secret confidence that

none of them can ever be made practicable, and give assurances of your hopes in that which in your heart you would regard as a dire calamity. You shall profess—what shall you not profess of Christian virtues?—benevolence, integrity, and self-devotion, albeit your life may offer some unhappy contrast to your declarations, and the well-known opinions of your friends but little corroborate the high ground of your assumption. In one word, you shall transfer the course of your corruption from your purse to your person. Instead of going to your banker for the means of corruption, it shall be to your heart you shall apply. You shall fit yourself for the Legislature by a course of profligate profession which would disgrace a strolling actor in soliciting patronage for his benefit. You shall be, in the most humiliating sense of the expression, “all things to all men,” and so accommodate your principles and shape your opinions, that you shall come out of this search after popular favour a creature without convictions—a man without one atom of manliness.

A word now for the voter. Not alone is the absurdity great in sending men to a deliberative assembly pledged to disregard all they shall hear there—bound, no matter how strong the evidence or how forcible the argument, to close their ears against all persuasion, and vote in open defiance of whatever may influence

their convictions; but there is the added absurdity that presupposes the Radical attorney of the village, the Mazzinian baker, or the Ledru-Rollinite grocer, to be a more adequate judge of political fitness than the trained and educated politician who has made law-making a study.

What should we say if, on the sailing of a great naval expedition, the boatswain, the carpenter, or the cook should step forward and demand explanations for what the fleet was intended; ask details of all that was to be done, and the means to do it; and impose certain pledges from the commanding officers that, under no circumstances, any interference was ever to occur with the daily privileges of the crew, their rations, or their tobacco?

We endure more outrageous absurdity than this. We permit ourselves to be lectured by ignorance and dragooned by self-conceit—to have the high duties of legislation taught by men whose aptitude for politics is generally acquired by a failure in some honest calling. These are the people who impose the tests and exact the pledges; these are the men, very rarely endowed with even the franchise, who step forward to catechise and cross-question and confound.

How if this system were to be carried out and applied to our juries, and men were to be asked, before they entered the box, or listened to the cause,

whether they would not pledge themselves to the plaintiff or the defendant?—whether they would not give some assurance that they would hold themselves aloof from all pressure of persuasion, deaf to argument, obdurate to conviction, and indifferent to the evidence?

Is it likely such a procedure would serve the interests or advance the ends of justice? And are not the functions of a Parliament very many times those of a jury?

The fact is, we have imported into our public life the system of Civil Service Examinations. Our candidates have to “go up” like our consuls and our tidewaiters, and, like *them*, the capable men are frequently plucked, while the well-drilled and well-ground postulants, “coached” by a practised hand, make a rather brilliant figure by the easy fluency with which they respond to what is asked of them.

If the world admire this—if they think it a good thing for the nation, and an element of strength or greatness to our people—they have the happiness of knowing that the coming autumn will give them an ample harvest of such benefits.

There are candidates and constituencies only impatient to show what a great thing is the election, and what a very small and ignoble one the elected.

GLIMPSES OF BLISS.

I REMEMBER, when a boy, to have seen a man who passed his days wandering from one book-stall to another, stopping a while to read at each, and in this way gratifying that taste for letters his humble fortune had denied him the power of more legitimately enjoying.

He must have had some small pittance to live on, for he never seemed to do anything for his support. His dress and belongings bespoke him as very poor, and there was a degree of humility in his manner that still more indicated narrow fortune. Thus, for instance, he never would presume to occupy the place of a possible purchaser, but would move respectfully away when such approached. In the same way was he cautious not to touch any volume in request, contenting himself for the most part with some old vellum-bound chronicle, some musty-looking record ;

and even these would he hastily surrender if a chance glance was turned towards them;—all such attentions declaring as plain as words themselves—"I am a mere interloper. I am here by no right. It is this good man's courtesy to let me run my eye over these pages." Though he never was known to buy, the stall-keepers bore him no ill-will; he was far too meek, too modest for that; and some actually liked to see him standing there, offering, as it were, his homage to those stores of wisdom they possessed, and thus testifying to the busy world that swept past, what a rich mine of knowledge lay there beside them, had they but the skill and the energy to work it.

At times too, rare indeed, he would venture on a word of remark—a sentence, perhaps, of praise of the volume he had just laid down, sufficient to attract the attention of a buyer; and these little criticisms having been known to do good service, the dealers bore grateful memory of them.

He was an object of much interest to me. I used to watch him as he read, and hasten to take up the book he had quitted, curious to see whether one class of reading had its principal attraction for him, and what that class might be. No clue could I find to his nature through his studies. Now he would pore for hours over a volume of Marco Polo—now

over a play of Ben Jonson's. I have seen him, on the same day, reading Dugald Stewart, 'Paul and Virginia,' 'Hopner's Equations,' and 'Bossuet's Sermons,'—nothing in his manner showing which interested him the most. The branch of the "Trade" who deal under atmospheric pressure is probably not remarkable for learning; and it was not unfrequent, when a book was offered there for purchase, to see a reference made to this stranger, who in a moment pronounced on the edition, and whether it had or had not been superseded by another — what its merits, what its defects. Very cunning was he in Elzevirs and Aldines, and had a rare taste in the margins and capital letters of the old Italian printers.

Over and over used I to speculate as to how he came by this knowledge, and wonderingly ask myself if it were a source of happiness to him. Again, I questioned, would all this greedy pursuit of learning I saw in him survive if he were suddenly to become rich and affluent, the owner of a well-stocked library, abounding in every appliance of ease and comfort? Would he hang as enraptured over that volume in the deep recess of a cushioned chair, as I have seen him when the rain beat against his face and the rude wind almost swept him and his treasure away? Would all the leisurely indulgence of literature equal in ecstasy those moments snatched hurriedly

in this dark alley, or down that narrow lane? Perhaps not. The battle is not to the strong, nor the race to the swift, any more in worldly happiness than in other things. The heart to enjoy is the great requisite; the objects to be enjoyed come only second; and there is something in those pleasures won by a sacrifice which have a sweetness all their own,—just as the guinea of a man's own earning has its especial value. Doubtless, then, this poor Eugene Aram had many a bright moment even as he stood cold and shivering there, nor knew the pang of sorrow till he came to part with what had charmed and entranced him.

No doubt, too, he often wandered away in thought to day-dreams of what delight it would be to be the owner of these treasures—to taste of them at will, having their society at all times to cheer, enliven, comfort, and console him. Nor is it impossible that his fancy gave to such a picture a colouring no reality could vie with, for there are few of us who cannot so cheat our own natures, and make the possible far more glowing than the actual.

What reminded me of this poor fellow was seeing what I may call his counterpart in society—one who, like him, was too poor to buy, yet longed to possess, and was thus forced to steal passing fitful glances of what he dare not linger over.

"Poor George! we are all very fond of him; but of course the girls never think of him." "He's too poor to marry," says mamma, who, like the benevolent stall-keeper, gives him leave to beguile his hour or so with what he must never possess. And how like is the Eugene Aram of Love to the Eugene Aram of Letters! The same deep devotion, the same fidelity, the same indifference to all other pursuits, the same humility in each. Even to that terrible test, the power of surrendering to another what they are not rich enough to secure for themselves, are they identical.

What scores of these do we find in the world, and how touching are they in their deep humility! Turning over the pages, as it were, looking wistfully into the volume, reading a line here, catching a passage there, and going away with some stray bit locked up in their hearts to ponder over, to dream over, to shed tears over—who knows? Look at the poor fellow when some transient word of kindness has fallen upon him, and say, have you ever seen a human thing so full of happiness? Watch him as he falls back, dropping the book a real purchaser would bid for—watch him as he steals away to hide his shame and his sorrow in another room, and tell me, have you ever seen more misery than his?

"It is only George!" as mamma says in a sort of

explanatory way to the party who comes to buy, and must needs ask, "Who is that fellow with the light whiskers?" "It is only George So-and-so." "Only!" Oh, the ineffable misery of that "only"—the cruelty that declares him to be of that category which are not even catalogued—creatures that nobody wants, nobody asks for.

Mammas are occasionally more severe than the stall folk; they will not even let him have the passing enjoyment of the few moments he would snatch from sorrow. They have no compassion for his indolence, nor any pity for his self-indulgence. What business has he with these fair pages, so white, so smooth, so hot-pressed! They are scarcely conciliated by all his humility, deep though it be. "He oughtn't to be there at all. It is not delicate of him; he knows perfectly well that he hasn't sixpence; he ought to feel"—I don't know what; but he ought certainly to see that seeing and hearing, when the sight is beauty and the sound is of sweet voices, are luxuries little suited to him who has nothing, and he should go his way, close his eyes, and walk in darkness.

Think of him when he comes back some morning, to hear that the book was sold. He was already in the third volume—deep, deep in the story. He had dreamed of it all night; and now another has

carried it off, and he shall never hear more of it. Ay, these things come of reading at the stalls—looking over what one can't buy, and ought not even to glance at.

I wonder if he who carries off the prize ever bestows a thought on the poor creature whose reading he has so ruthlessly cut short. Is he sorry for him? Perhaps not—perhaps he never heard of him. Perhaps he merely saw him as he stood at the stall, and noticed him as he stole meekly, modestly away.

Now and then, I take it, some of these poor scholars rise to greatness, and become men of mark and note; the small spark of genius glowing out till it becomes like a sun, to cover the earth with its light, so that they who read by it see what their unaided sight had never shown them. I wonder—oh, how I wonder!—if then, in the day of triumph and success, they ever enjoyed, with all the appliances of luxury, what they once felt as they stood at the stall, unable to buy, unable to relinquish.

ANONYMOUS AUTHORSHIP.

WHEN a certain distinguished contemporary of ours experimented on the world of his friends and admirers by the announcement of his death, and thereby provoked a very candid examination into his claims to greatness, he was not, it is said, as much flattered by the experiment as he had hoped to be. Some gifts were altogether denied him, others were conceded with certain little accompanying detractions. Ingenious explanations were given to show why he had not done scores of things he had never dreamed of; and finally, curious speculations were thrown out as to how far certain æsthetical deficiencies in his nature may not have impaired the exercise of his purely intellectual faculties. In fact, the critics presumed to be able, by a *post mortem*, to pronounce upon the man's defects pretty much as the surgeon might on his physical derangements;

and as the doctors, on discovering a lesion here, an adhesion there, an ossification of this, or a hypertrophy of that, could unerringly declare why life was shortened, so would these skilful anatomists be able to say how it was that he failed in this or broke down in that—what were those qualities that were wanting to have made him as eminent as certain other gifts indicated he might have been.

In a word, the restraint of all concealment would appear to do for these wonderful critics just as much as the “autopsy” does for the doctor. All is laid open to them. There lies “the subject,” and we can trace every fibre of him now. All the little devices by which he deceived, all the subtleties by which he cajoled us, avail him no longer. We see him as he was in life; and as the surgeon is often obliged to own his astonishment by what a frail thread vitality hung so long, so will the biographer be forced to confess that there was wonderfully little strength in all that vigour that once impressed us—only a mere pretence of passion in the pathos that once had all but convulsed us. I am ready to own that I am sorry for this. Mistaking our geese for swans may be an ornithological error, but is not bad philosophy. I am certain that we are disposed to over-cultivate the difficulty of being pleased, and

that, on the whole, we would infinitely rather be content than discontented.

At all events, I am determined I will never put my friends to the severe test of animadverting on my character during my life, by any announcement of my death. "*Les absents ont toujours tort*," says a wise adage of that language which is so seldom mistaken in worldly matters; and as Curran tells us, "Death and absence differ but in name."

Indeed, I know I couldn't do it if I would. I could no more submit to the knife of any critic than I could endure the scalpel of the dissector without crying out, "Stop—I am alive!" I admit this is a great weakness on my part, in some measure the result of temperament, and partly, too, the consequence of a certain self-indulgent mode of dealing with any difficulty by going out to meet it in preference to averting or waiting to see if it would not pass by. My combativeness enables me to bear the open stand-up fight; what I really fear is, what may take place when I am not forthcoming to defend myself.

For this reason I have never been able to understand how people have courage to go in mask to a ball, and endure all the impertinences to which the disguise exposes them. Surely there is no throwing off one's identity by the mere assumption of a

domino ; and what terrible stabs to one's self-esteem may be given under the cope of a monk or the cowl of a Capuchin ! The next thing to this is to publish anonymously — to give to the world a poem or a novel, and lie perdu while your friends read, ridicule, or revile it—to sit calmly, smilingly by, when some one reads you aloud to a laughing audience, overwhelmed with your absurdity—to be warned against your own book—to be confidentially told, “ It's the very worst thing of the season ”—to hear little fragments of yourself bandied about as domestic droleries, and to listen to curious speculations as to how or why the publisher had ever adventured on such a production, and grave questions put if there be really a public for such trash.

It is an awful thing to assist at even this much of one's own autopsy, and to hear all the impertinent things that the very stupidest of your acquaintances can say of you. But there is still worse than this ; there is a depth lower than abuse ; there is a pang infinitely more painful than all that sarcasm or malevolence can inflict ; and this is, the being obliged to listen, patiently, while some addle-headed imbecile relates the argument or the story of your book ; mistaking the characters, misplacing the events, totally inverting your moral, and exhibiting you, in the very moment of his commendation, as a

creature so cruelly akin to himself that you might be his brother—to be consolingly assured that though the tenor of the book be slow, and the author unquestionably a dull man, there are now and then little gleams of intelligence in him, and little signs of would-be smartness. Then come the guesses, whether you may not be Mr Spurgeon, Martin Somebody, or perhaps a female writer.

It is twenty-one years, compassionate reader, since I underwent all this, and the suffering is as fresh as if it was yesterday. I remember the very table where they cut me up—I can recall the chair on which I sat to be lacerated—I can bring to mind the drivelling idiot that had got bits of my unhappy production, as he thought, by heart, and declaimed them, with interpolated balderdash of his own, till my reason actually wandered under the infliction.

I declare it, and declare it advisedly, that though few men are ever killed by severe criticism, numbers drop into an early grave, or, worse again, into drivelling incapacity, from the effects of a mistaken admiration. The people who go about advertising your deformities, praising the hump on your back, your squint, your hare-lip, these are your real destroyers.

The last of my anonymous miseries was the seeing my volume—the work over which I had toiled and

laboured, pondered over by day, dreamed of at night, revolved in such shapes that it became part of my very nature, and its characters dearer to me than kith or kin—seeing this held aloft by a book auctioneer as he said, “What shall we say for this, gentlemen? I have not read it, but I am told that it once had a considerable vogue; it is handsomely bound in calf, with gilt edges. Will any gentleman say two shillings—half the cost of the binding?—Thank you, sir! At sixpence it is going—gone!”

Oh, Fame! what a terrible *ignis fatuus* you are; and, dear me! what cruel “croppers” some of us do meet in pursuit of you!

WHAT'S WHAT IN '65.

I READ in the advertisements—I have never seen it—of a little volume with the title, 'Who's Who,' purporting to be a sort of *vade mecum* to all that large class of people who like to hear about other people with whom they do not live.

The taste for this sort of knowledge must unquestionably be on the increase, since a large space in many of our leading newspapers is devoted to a species of gossip in which personality is the point; and here we have a periodical—for this little volume appears annually—especially instituted to supply this want.

The taste is, besides, a very national one. There is something in the humoristic temperament of our people that leads them to attach great interest to whatever is identified with those who are known to them by fame and reputation; and thus we see what

value is attached to the most commonplace words employed by a sovereign—how we go about repeating to each other some very ordinary expressions of a prince or a princess—and to what ecstasies we are carried by the jokes of a Minister, whose wit, it is fair to hope, is not on a par with his wisdom.

I am very willing to recognise something besides “snobbery” in this ready appreciation of notorieties; and I do hope that, in part at least, it has its source in the racy geniality of our people.

Hence is it that, while we have bulky volumes of Peerages, Baronetages, Landed Gentry, and so forth, the whole continent of Europe rests satisfied with a little insignificant tome called the ‘Almanach de Gotha.’ How suggestive is this! to what a world of speculation might it lead one! Nor is it without its significance that a greater prestige should attach itself to nobility in a land where the nobles are comparatively *novi homines*, than to those countries whose great names come down from the most remote ages. Possibly we are proud of our peerage as the City man was of his port-wine—because he had made it himself.

‘Who’s Who,’ however, deals with other than the titled classes. From its pages we learn who are all those distinguished people who veil their celebrity

behind pseudonyms, or, more secretly still, preserve the anonymous; and thus are we instructed who is Paterfamilias of the 'Times,' who is Historicus, who wrote the 'Roving Englishman,' who edits the 'Owl'

It may be that, in the obscure and out-of-the-world life I lead, I place a great value on these things: like the prisoner who made a companion of a spider, it is just possible that my solitude may lead me to attach undue importance to such crumbs of information as every Dives of knowledge lets drop from his table. I own, however, in all humility, I do like them, and, if I could, I should like to have photographs of great celebrities, such as Mr Toole the Toast-master, Mr Spurgeon, and that accomplished gentleman—I forget his name—who takes excursionists over Europe, and enables them to do Italy—maccaroni and the galleries included—for fifteen pound five shillings.

How gratifying to be able to look upon the counterpart of those great men, whose fame has become a national possession!

Turning, however, from this gratifying prospect, let me suggest another volume, which might be made a companion to this valuable little book, and whose title might be 'What's What.' Colloquially indeed it is in our power, though possibly not always

our convenience, to call a spade a spade. The pleasant privilege of plain speech has occasionally its difficulties, and even with the very best intentions the exact signification of a word may lead us into the realms of a legal disputation. We all of us who read the newspapers know that there is nothing more difficult than to say, What is a marriage? You may, it has been shown, be married in Scotland, unmarried in England, and a little of both, or rather, as a foreigner expressed it, rather more Yes than No, in Ireland.

There was only one man in all England, and he is now dead—Sir Cresswell Cresswell—who thoroughly understood what constituted cruelty, in the conjugal sense of that crime; that is to say, who could lay down how long it was legally safe to keep one's wife out in the cold of a winter's night at the end of the garden, or with what degree of temperature of hot water it was statutable to scald her. The thickness of the stick with which correction might be administered has long been popularly understood, and more currently ventilated, perhaps, through the ingenious device of the gifted individual who poulticed his thumb in order to afford himself the measure of a more efficient weapon of castigation.

Now, if we know little about cruelty, we know less about madness. Is there, I ask, in all England,

any one who can say why this man has got his pardon on the ground of insanity, and that other has been hanged for a precisely similar crime, committed, so far as ordinary intelligence can perceive, under like instigations? Where, or in what, I would ask, lies the trait, the circumstance, or the feature which made this creature irresponsible, and that other a criminal and a murderer?

Who has ever been able to define, at least in such a way as may exclude cavil, the meaning of the word conspiracy? Of course, I exclude from any implied censure my brilliant countryman, Mr Burke Bethel, who said—"This word 'conspiracy,' gentlemen of the jury, is derived from two Latin words which signify, *con*, to breathe, and *spiro*, together." But since this lucid explanation, who, I ask, has succeeded in showing us what is a conspiracy? Let me mention an incident which will show the importance of the inquiry.

About thirty years ago, when those atrocious crimes were committed which made the name of Burke a generic title for such murders, an old woman entered the shop of a surgeon-apothecary in an Irish county town, and offered to sell him a "subject." He was quite ready to complete the contract, but he desired to learn some details for his guidance as to the value of the object in question, and put to her,

for this purpose, certain queries. Imagine his horror to discover that "the subject" was at that very moment alive—being a boy of nine or ten years of age—but of whom, the bargain being made, the old woman was perfectly prepared to "dispose," she being so far provident as not to bring a perishable commodity to market till she had secured a purchaser. Determined that such atrocity should not go unpunished, he made an appointment with her for another day, on which she should return and more explicitly acquaint him with all she intended to do, and the means by which she meant to secure secrecy. At this meeting—that his testimony should be corroborated—he managed that a policeman should be present, and, concealed beneath the counter, listen to all that went forward. The interview, accordingly, took place; the old woman was true to her appointment, and most circumstantially entered into the details of the intended assassination, which she described as the easiest thing in life—a pitch plaster over the mouth and a tub of water being the inexpensive requisites of the case. When her narrative, to which she imparted a terrible gusto, was finished, the policeman came forth from his lair and arrested her. She was thrown at once into prison, and sent for trial to the next assizes. Now, however, came the difficulty. For what should she be arraigned?

It was not a murder—it was still incomplete. It was, therefore, conspiracy to kill; but a single individual cannot “conspire;” and so, to fix her with the crime, it would be necessary to include the surgeon in the indictment. If they wanted to try the old woman, the doctor must share the dock. Now all the ardour for justice could scarcely be supposed to carry a man so far; the doctor “demurred” to the arrangement, and the old hag was set at liberty.

This circumstance, which occurred less than thirty years ago, was brought to my mind a few days since on reading the debate on the Belfast riots. When the Government was charged with meting out a different measure of its favour to Orangemen and Papists, punishing the few and tolerating everything in the many, a very formidable attack was made on them, to show that not only had they looked calmly on when eighty thousand people marched triumphantly through the capital with drums and banners, and insignia of various kinds, but when a few zealous admirers of the glorious and immortal King who rescued us from a debased coinage and uncomfortable shoes, walked to church in his honour, they arrested and imprisoned them. The reply was something to this purport,—“Nobody minded the eighty thousand, but the eight or ten with their fifes and Orange ribbons were really irritating and provoking, for

they were what the law contemplated when it denounced a procession." On this arose a question, What is a procession? It takes two to make a conspiracy—will three be enough to make a procession? Mr Whiteside opined yes, for he said that the three in one case were made up by a man, his horse, and his cart. There were great lawyers in that debate, and yet I grieve to say that they left the vexed question pretty much as they found it, and we of the outer world are just as ignorant as ever—what is a procession?

The eighty thousand, with their banners and music and mottoes, were clearly not a procession. If they had been, our wise and just rulers would unquestionably have suppressed them. He of the horse and cart was, however, a procession, and a procession so very aggravating, and irritating too, to somebody's feelings, as to call for a special appeal to the authorities to crush him.

I declare when I read of these things I have no words for my admiration of the acute intellects which rule us. Hair-splitting is a coarse labour compared to the refined skill with which they make these subtle distinctions, detecting the element of an essential difference where all ordinary minds are lost in fog and confusion.

I can imagine without any inordinate difficulty a

man, not remarkably timorous, feeling a certain apprehension on seeing a great city for eight or ten hours in the possession of an immense multitude, whose order and organisation bespoke unity and concert of purpose, but I cannot so easily conceive the irritable legality that was outraged by the man in the cart. The Secretary for Ireland, however, knows better. To his prescient eyes the cloud no bigger than a man's hand is worse than the whole hurricane. It is what the First Napoleon called "the power of the unknown number."

Englishmen are so firmly possessed with the idea that everything in Ireland is absurd, anomalous, and upside-down, that they are ever ready to accept the most ridiculous explanations of whatever occurs there, and to hear a policy defended which, if applied to any other portion of the kingdom, they would scout with indignation. Change the venue, for instance, of these late events, and will any one tell me they would be dealt with in the same fashion?

Men are not permitted to talk of India as people talk of Ireland: the references to national peculiarities and the tendencies of race would not be tolerated if applied to the Bengalee. You would have to apologise to your reader in asking him to credit some practices of the Tonga islanders, which you might tell of Tipperary without prelude or precau-

tion ; and all this simply because there is a conventional Ireland and a conventional Irishman, to which Cockneydom believes all extravagances are possible. How valuable would it be, then, to know, through the authority of this little book, "What's an Irishman?"

Not less instructive would it be to hear What's a Colony? Is a colony an integral part of the nation, inhabited by subjects of the same sovereign that rules the parent state, and bound up with the fortunes of the mother-country? or is a colony a hanger-on of the family, to be helped and assisted when times are prosperous and things go well, but to be turned adrift whenever retrenchment is necessary, and it may be thought prudent "to reduce the establishment"?

The mass of things which want explanation and accurate definition is positively astounding. It was but the other day we saw a trial to establish what was a Christy's Minstrel, which set me a-thinking how puzzling would the same sort of testimony as was then proffered be if applied to the question, What's a Conservative? Was Lord Palmerston the rightful heir and owner of Peel's "Banjo"? or are the melodies now sung on the Treasury benches the same as those of the old Conservative "Christies"? As to blackness, there is not much to be said—they are pretty like their predecessors.

Again: What's a dramatic performance? Is Mr Vincent Scully, for instance, an actor "within the meaning of the Act"?

Well may Lord Dundreary say that no fellow can possibly know any of these things. It took the whole Privy Council t'other day to determine what a Colonial Bishop was not; but all the collective wisdom of the nation would be sore pushed if they had to declare, in set terms, what a Colonial Bishop was, and is.

For all these reasons, I do entreat some ingenious and active mind to supply the want I have here indicated. The real benefactor of his contemporaries would not be he who arrests Sunday travelling, corks up the beer-bottle, or suppresses the tea-garden, nor even that grander intelligence that suggests a new claim to the franchise; but that more practical spirit who, compassionating the confusion we live in, and seeing the inefficacy of our struggles to comprehend, would come frankly to our aid and teach us "What's What" in the year '65.

SWANLIKE GEESE.

THERE is a strange inconsistency which I recognise in my nature, and which, I have no doubt, many others have experienced in their own, and of which I have never been able to arrive at a satisfactory explanation. How is it, I ask, that while one is never contented with his lot in life, always believing that Fate has ill-treated him, he is nevertheless profoundly convinced, that whatever is his is the very best possible thing of its kind that ever was born, hatched, nurtured, fashioned, or formed — that, in fact, his geese are not merely swans, but infinitely prettier than his neighbours' swans — whiter, more stately, and more graceful?

Some will perhaps demur to either or both of my propositions. One may tell me that his well-balanced mind has never known what it was to

feel discontent; and another may say that he has so far pushed his sense of dissatisfaction, that he regards all around him, all that he has and owns, as the worst that ever befell humanity. With such extremes I deal not; I take humanity *ex medio acervo*, and believe it will be found that the mass is of a temperament like my own.

Now, I am free to own I have no right to be boastful of the possession of a spirit of Christian resignation or philosophic contentedness. It is not in my nature to see that all things have gone as well as possible with me in life; on the contrary, I have, as I think, a whole rookery of "crows to pluck" with Destiny. I cannot persuade myself that I am not a far finer creature than the world will admit,—braver, bolder, wittier, pleasanter, more genial, more forgiving—more fifty other excellent things, in short—than have ever been scored down in the credit side of my account with humanity. If the conviction has not put me out of temper with my fellow-men, it is in a good measure because I ascribed much of this unfairness to envy, and much to ignorance; but still the conviction is there, and whatever other scepticism may torment or tease me, there is one form of it I have never felt. I have never disbelieved in myself. This will show, therefore, that I am not in that happy category of mortals

which assumes to be the pets of Fortune. I have my grudges against the world, and I go on through life with the conviction that I am to carry these grudges to my grave—what to do with them there I know not. Don't mistake me for a moment, and think me one of those dyspeptic wretches who go about deploring their own digestion, and destroying other men's. I make no lamentations over hard fate and cruel usage. I don't prefer a suit against the world, and file my bill against human ingratitude. I am too proud to ask even for my own, but I'll not pretend to say that I concur in the verdict that has robbed, or the decree that has despoiled me. No. I see in myself an ill-used man, and, what is worse, I am by no means sure the world will ever discover it. With this heavy load on my heart—very heavy at certain times, very hard to bear in dreary November weather—is it not strange that I can persist in believing that whatever I possess as my own is the best possible thing that ever was produced of its kind? My ox and my ass—I won't say anything about my man-servant and my maid-servant, but my cattle, and even the stranger within my gates—I maintain to be better than my neighbour's cattle and my neighbour's stranger; and I uphold that they have certain qualities, difficult though they be of vulgar appreciation,

in which they excel his cattle and his stranger, and beat them clean out of the field.

This belief neither makes me vainglorious nor intolerant. It is true, I cannot explain it. I know of no earthly reason why the scrubby little pony, whose capped hocks and heavy head and low shoulders I descanted on so freely while the butcher owned him, should, on his becoming mine, be transformed into a model of equine perfection, no more than I can tell why that patched and blistered little sketch in oils, which I picked up for a crown at an old-furniture shop, should have some touches wonderfully like Mieris, and be unquestionably a good specimen of the Flemish School. All I know is, that my Skye terrier is better bred, my gun carries farther, and my jasmine-tree blossoms earlier and better, and continues longer in bloom, than any other man's, be the same who he may. These are not fancies. They are no delusions. They are things I know and feel to be true. They are palpable parts of my self-consciousness, not a whit the less dear to my heart that an envious world will now and then dispute them. Indeed I accept that same depreciation as a necessary consequence of my superiority.

I am well aware that my neighbour prefers claims to a real excellence, and thinks his dog is bigger or

his peacock finer than mine. I make every allowance for the poor fellow's weakness; he never was an *esprit fort*, and that last fever left "dregs" behind it. If his delusion give him any pleasure, in heaven's name let him have it. Enough for me that I know better.

To bring this crop of convictions to full perfection—to enable them to put forth all their shoots and develop their fruit in due season—one must live in somewhat of estrangement from the world. The ordinary clash and clatter of mankind must be shunned—the rough and tumble of life must be avoided. From coarse-minded men, hard, stern, uncomfortable judgments, that they stupidly call "truths," are continually dropping; and there are creatures ready to give their vulgar opinions at every moment, and tell you scores of things that push your patience to its last intrenchment.

Let one of these fellows into your grounds, and they'll pluck your swan's feathers to such a purpose, that, though they won't persuade you he was a goose, they'll give him a horrible resemblance to one!

They have positively a diabolic dexterity in the practice, and they'll leave the bird in such a plight that you'll never think the same of him again. Of course they'll swear to you that they never touched

him. They are ready to make the most solemn affidavit that all they have done is to direct your attention to certain little imperfections, a deficiency here, a redundancy there, that have escaped you. They tell you compassionately, with a sort of commiserative courtesy that is worse than the cold stage of the *ague*, that you have only to use your eyes to see that the bird is a goose, and not even a fine specimen of *gooserie*—that neither its bill nor its breast, its feathers nor its form, are swanlike. The wretches try to reason you out of what, if you surrender, gives all colour to existence—all its sweetness and perfume to life.

Big cities, towns of any kind, are very unfavourable to swanlike geese. The people who live in these places are singularly wilful and cruel, and pluck the quill-feathers out of one's poor bird out of pure malevolence and a love of mischief. Indeed, much intercourse with the world is a sore test to the rearing of these delicate birds. For my own part—I say it not at all boastfully—I can follow the practice under every disadvantage of place, and every test of difficulty. I can come back from the conservatory of Chatsworth and think that the box of *mignonette* under my window is sweeter in perfume, and more delicate in colour, and fresher in bloom, than all that I saw there. Nor is this a delusion.

What do you or I see in that starved cur, with misshapen head and deformed body, that skulks after the ill-favoured man in the fustian jacket? Is he to us anything but an ill-bred mangy mongrel? And yet to his master's eye he has a load of qualities; he is faithful, and fond, and watchful, and forgiving, mindful of all said to him, and well knowing how to accommodate himself to the rubs and attritions of a hard world. Yes, that sorry-looking beast understands and lends himself to the life of him that owns him; and there is a bond between them just as strong—what am I saying?—ten thousand times as strong, as that which ties my lord to his noble staghound. The inordinate value for that which is one's own is especially the gift of the poor man. First of all, your Cræsus really never attains to the perfect sense of possession, so much is expended in display, ostentation, and exhibition. He who opens his picture-gallery twice a-week is, on those days at least, no more the owner of his Titians than I am. I am not sure if, for the time being, I, in my more intense rapture with the great artist's work, have not a stronger claim to call the canvass mine than he has. There is a coy damsel, by Greuze, over the door in the small drawing-room at Prince Demidoff's splendid villa at San Donato; she is drawing a shawl across her shoulders, and while doing so, and

seemingly occupied with the action, she steals a look under her long lashes—and such a look, so bewitchingly tender and shy, so full of sweet enchantment and a sense of drollery, that when you move away from the spot, all the smiles of real, actual, living beauty, seem poor, tame, and soulless in comparison. Now, I not only aver that the Prince who owns this incomparable Houri, not only never gazed on her with such rapture as I have, but I am ready to declare that she never yet bestowed upon him such a glance of beaming tenderness as she has let fall upon me. The rich Scythian owns her image, but her heart is mine!

These are the things which constitute the wealth of the poor man, and of which no fall in the Funds, no smash in securities, can rob him. It is in the exercise of these gifts of “enjoyability”—*passé moi le mot*—that he not only redresses the balance of his destiny, but that he cultivates that faculty of fruition which makes him feel a positive ecstasy in whatever is his own.

It is not, then, in my ignorance that I declare that my clove-pink, or my gooseberry-wine, or my wheelbarrow, are incomparably the best in Europe. I who say this have seen men and cities. I am much travelled, and in the many-sided ways of men considerably versed. I have seen ducal swans at Blen-

heim, and imperial swans at Versailles, and I come home to recognise in my own swan—the bird that some envious traducer has called a goose—a creature infinitely more beautiful and more stately.

Mind—it is all-important to mind—that there is no intolerance in all this. I seek not to mould you to my opinion ; I want no converts. Fill your heart choke-full, if you like, of convictions of my folly and stupidity. Believe me a fool or a fanatic. I only stipulate that you do not wound me unnecessarily by telling me so. Go your way with the lowest opinion of my intelligence, but leave me my faith—my faith in myself.

The perfect ecstasy of possession is, I repeat, only known to the poor man. To him the cherished object is the rampart against the storm. It is the little nook where he nestles during the tempest ; and just as the shipwrecked sailor attaches a fonder love to the plank he clings to than ever captain felt for the proudest three-decker, so is it that poverty invests some humble thing with a higher, dearer, holier interest than affluence ever threw around a priceless possession.

If it were not for this, humble fortune would be a worse thing than it is ; but the glorious alchemy of that little pronoun “Mine” can work wonders. Through its magic my little field becomes a bound-

less prairie, and the scrubby trees that shelter me from the highroad are a grove. As for my swan, though Mrs O'Dowd nearly made my blood run cold by something she said about Michaelmas, my swan is the greatest of swans, and might claim descent from one of Jove's own.

And oh, my friends! let none laugh you out of this wise philosophy, nor by a sarcasm rob you of your faith. Delusion! Why, what is all around us but delusion? Is not Court favour a delusion? Is not fame a delusion? Are not the Whigs a delusion? together with cod-liver oil, Mechi's razors, and the Sydenham trousers? Some people even think the French Empire a delusion.

Be not ashamed, therefore, for a sneer, nor affrighted by a sarcasm. Go back and sit down beside your pond; and when your swan sails forth in all his graceful dignity, enjoy your quiet laugh over the creatures that only see him as a goose.

O'DOWD'S EXPERIENCES

"EN VOYAGE."—ACT I.

THE ordinary channels of information—as the late Sir Robert Peel, by a neat but unnecessary periphrase, designated the newspapers—have just informed me that “Cornelius O’Dowd passed through Paris” on a certain day “*en route* to his seat on the Lago Maggiore.”

I read the paragraph with a pleased vanity. It seemed, first of all, to imply that the fact had a certain importance and interest for the world at large, who, knowing who Cornelius O’Dowd was, would gladly learn something of his whereabouts; and secondly, there was in the mention of his “seat on the Lago Maggiore” what, to the uninitiated at least, smacked of worldly goods and material guarantees, very captivating to one who is often obliged, as Sheridan phrased it, “to call upon his imagination for his facts.”

The paragraph in question would have left nothing to be desired had it added, "Mr O'Dowd in crossing the Alps waved his grateful adieux to his friends north of them.—No cards sent."

I borrow the latter formula from those people who announce to the public that, having just got married, they are too much engrossed by the honeymoon to select objects for their gratitude, and yet desire to include in one wide swoop all their well-wishers and admirers: and so say I, once more, "No cards sent." Indeed, I know of no amount of pasteboard that could convey even a tithe of my gratitude. What have I not had of flattery, attentions, and civilities—of fine compliments and fish dinners—of dry champagne and dulcet courtesies—of all, in fact, that can gratify, nourish, and captivate! I have attained to that pinnacle to which aldermen and poets alike aspire as the summit of human wishes. I have been flattered and I have been fed.

Some six weeks ago I issued forth from the solitude of my rocks and wild olives to see a little of that great and busy world of whose doings for years I have had only cognisance at second-hand; and second-hand opinions, like second-hand clothes, have the same disadvantage, that they reach one with the gloss off, and no small share, besides, of patching and reparation. It was, therefore, no slight matter

to me, humble Hermit of the Encumbered Estates Court, that I could go out and see for myself, charter my own craft, and be my own pilot.

You gentlemen of Piccadilly who lounge in Rotten Row know very little of the overwhelming excitement produced on one who lives the dreary life of Italian do-nothingness, by the mere sights and sounds of that everyday world in which you move ; nor can you measure the mingled confusion and enjoyment of him who hears more in half an hour than he had imagined in half a year ; and who, just as a man in a balloon sees in one sweep of his vision more of the earth than in a whole lifetime, gains by one fleeting glance, a wider, broader, more far-stretching view of humanity than ever before he had attained to.

When I started on my "Outing"—as a Cockney would call it—I issued to myself a sort of instruction. I said something like this : Cornelius, you are about to revisit a world which is no longer what it was when you last saw it. Many things has it forgotten—much has it learned since then. Not to weary with enumeration, bear in mind that the telegraph now usurps all prophecy, except for the winner of the Derby, and that men walk with a light their fathers had not, in the matter of Colenso, and the "Call for trumps." Great movements are also in progress. Wise statesmen have discovered

that to redress the inequality of worldly wealth it would be well to intrust the least responsible with political power, to rule those above them, and that a man who pays annually six pounds for his domicile has both the capacity and the leisure to be a politician. Bethink you also that in Ireland the discontent with landlordism is such that grave and profound thinkers have thought of transferring the right of property to the tenant, and seeing if, by a nice adjustment of claims, the peasant might not be disposed to accord some moiety of his surplus gains to the assistance of the once-proprietor.

The Senate and the Stage are also not what you remember them. Canning, nor Plunkett, nor the great Kean or Macready, would now be tolerated. The nation has risen above mere sound and cant; they demand the practical, the palpable, the plainly effective, and hence they prefer to hear Cumming in the pulpit, and Darby Griffith in the House, and would rather have a raw-and-bloody-bones novel of the sensational school than Sir Walter and all his works.

Socially, too, great changes are in operation. The Volunteer movement has gone far to efface class distinctions. The "swell" lies down with the snob; and the influence of this spirit has even extended to the Church, who are beginning to bethink them that

even common people have occasionally souls to be saved, and that all ragged folk are not as essentially shut out from heaven as they are denied the franchise. Hence is it that we see bland curates go down among the heathen of the Haymarket, and doctors of divinity drink tea with Delilahs—perilous temptation, that nothing short of piety would confront.

Lastly, I enjoined myself to inquire what progress socialities were making—how about dinners—was the cooking better—was conversation more brilliant—were the talkers wittier—were the *entrées* hotter—was opinion more moderate—expression neater—banter more refined—was there less melted butter—had, as I was taught to believe, positiveness gone out with port, and a more courteous spirit come in with claret—above all, had the influence of woman increased—were the opportunities of its exercise more extended—and were men more cowed by crinolines than their fathers once were by limp petticoats?

Were not these subjects enough for a Special Commission? were not these matters for a very Blue-book itself?

Of course I directed a special attention to Ireland, and to report if I could whether the country was more prosperous in the repletion of her raggedness,

or in the debility of a diminished population and a deserted soil. I was also to inquire if the wit had expired with the temperance movement, and whether the drollery of the Irish bar had died out with the decline of fun in the hackney-car men—two facts far more copulative than the connection of Tenterden Steeple with the Goodwin Sands.

In a word, I was—to use the vulgar but significant expression—to keep my weather eye open on all around me, and so to employ my opportunities that I might return to my mountain fastnesses wiser than I had quitted them. Let me own—for what I am now saying to my readers has the substance of a confession—that my greatest difficulty was to discard from my mind the influence of certain preconceived opinions, and not to find myself an advocate where I ought to be the judge. It would have been, I acknowledge it, more than agreeable to me to be assured that England was not only stronger, and richer, and greater, but that she was also more tolerant, more charitable, more conciliating in manners, more courteous in forms, than I had left her; that Ireland was improving, her people better fed and clothed, and her fields better tilled, with a wider contentment over the land, and the dawn, at least, of a more conciliatory spirit between hostile classes.

I was not sanguine as to certain things. The

newspapers had shown me that the attempts to elevate public taste in the matter of public amusements had scarcely been a success. The aspirations of those who would make England artistic were yet to be realised ; but I hoped and believed that something had been accomplished in that direction, and that these great raree shows, in these gigantic glass houses, must have had something to produce as fruit.

I did not expect great eloquence anywhere, parliament or pulpit. I did not calculate on any extraordinary dramatic ability ; neither did I hope to meet learned conversationalists or original talkers, and I had my reward : " Blessed are they who expect little."

From what I have said it will be seen that if hopeful I was moderate, and that if I wished for much I would still be amply satisfied with a mere moiety of my expectations ; and thus thinking and feeling, I set forth on my journey.

Paris is a very trying portal to those who visit England. Just as the splendid glitter of a gorgeous drawing-room, resplendent with gold and ablaze with wax-lights, is a fierce contrast to the dingy obscurity of the dining-room, dark with mahogany and solemn in its stately sideboard, the pulse of life bounds lightly with gaiety in the one city, and in

the other throbs with the laboured force of a plethora. The mass of England strikes one as more powerful, but wanting in elasticity. London is a hypertrophied heart; it has almost outgrown its functions, and has to labour immensely to maintain the circulation; while in Paris the life-blood bounds freely along, animating, stimulating, and invigorating. I know there is a good deal of "make-up" in all this; no small share of rouge, and pearl-powder, and whisker-dye. But strange to say, the wearer is imposed on by his own artifices, and when he looks in the glass fancies himself as youthful and as fascinating as paint and enamel would make him.

This self-satisfaction goes a great way in the charming captivation of the French nature. It is out of the perennial spring of this self-esteem that they give us those intoxicating sips that turn all our heads with enthusiasm for their delightful qualities.

Now, we are so bent on being valued for our sterling gifts in England that we put on a little extra ruggedness to make the discovery of them more meritorious. We are so resolved to be prized for our good qualities that we look upon it as a sort of fraud to have graceful ones.

It was on a bright May morning I found myself in that car-drivingest city called Dublin, which, with

a few and not very important changes, was exactly as I had left it more than a dozen years before. The most significant alteration was the taking down the railing around the statue of King William, so that the obstruction caused by him of pious memory to the free passage of College Green no longer existed. I wonder, small as the change was, how it was ever accomplished. What a triumph it must have been to Dr Cullen! and what grief and shame to the Grand Purple somebody in a northern county. There was a statue of Moore, too—a dirty little man hailing a cab! Was this all that Ireland could do for her great lyric poet? It may gratify those who cherish the Union to know that in some points at least the Irish are intensely English, and that in our love of the fine arts, and especially in what regards sculpture, we are as intensely imbued with bad taste and barbarism as the Saxon himself.

Why cannot we hit upon some perishable material wherewith to commemorate our celebrities, so that our shame should not be perpetual? When a distinguished Irish gentleman once heard that royalty had graciously been pleased to declare the intention of conferring upon him a baronetcy, he pleaded that he was unconscious of any act in his life which could have justly exposed him to his sovereign's displeasure. "At all events," said he, "my innocent child

of three years of age could in no way have offended his Majesty. May I entreat, therefore, that the King would graciously commute the sentence to knighthood, so that the disgrace might die with me?"

Could we not hit upon something like this for our statues? Why not make them of bog-oak, or, better still, of turf?—the material would have its appropriateness in its very nationality; and how pleasant it would be to feel that the ridicule to which we expose our distinguished countrymen should not be transmitted to a late posterity.

Dublin was, as I have said, unchanged. I verily believe that the same carman that used to take me down to the Pigeon-House as a boy drove me to Morrison's. The orangewomen were, in that snug nook next the Provost's house, the same representatives of battered beauty that I remembered them in my freshman days, and the ancient porters, or "Senior fellows," I forget which they call them, at the college gate, looked as austere academic as in the times of my youth. Shall I own that all this was very gratifying to me? and I felt that I loved the trees in Merrion Square all the more that they were the same little scrubby abortions I had known in my boyhood. What an inexhaustible mine of conservatism is Ireland! how persistently she stands

fast where she doesn't go backward ! how indolent, how lazy, how devil-may-care looked the whole population !

The International Exhibition was open, a very beautiful and a very interesting sight, but comparatively few went to see it. A review in the Phoenix, or a flower-show, "drew" far better than all the display of foreign art or native manufacture. The forty-something regiment carried the day, as it always did, and the bright-eyed belles of Dublin bestowed their sweetest smiles on those dull Dundrearies, not one of whom did not believe that he owed his success to his personal captivations instead of to that intensely national tendency which induces everything Irish to do the honours of Ireland. I sauntered down to the Four Courts, and it did me good to hear an equity pleading in a brogue that sounded like an *Æolian* harp over the bog of Allen. Some of those I remembered as jesters were here as judges, not looking so happy at the change as gratitude might have made them. The idlers with the red noses were there still, a shade duskier in garment and a tint rosier in proboscis, but the same in the tone of slang, jocoseness, and slovenly despair as I had ever seen them. A sort of everlasting Decree *nisi* seemed to hang over them, and unless they could be born again, nothing could make them barristers.

Here, however, there was great change. The large incomes that the bar yielded in the days of O'Connell, existed no longer—the leading men not making even half of what the great pleaders realised in those times. I asked often for the explanation: whether the Irish had grown less litigious or more economical in their litigations? Was property less worth fighting for? or were the men who conducted the battle less estimated as pugilists? None could tell me. Perhaps, after all, the crew never work so vigorously at the pumps where the ship has many leaks, as where the craft has only started a plank and can soon be made stanch again.

There was a look of dreary weariness, of tired-out attention, over every court I entered; and it was only when the crier bawled out Silence! that I knew the court was sitting, and that it was not respectful in the jurymen to yawn so loud.

If there were no fortunes to be made, as little was there any fun.

The wit and the wisdom of Ireland were more closely banded together than people usually think. The days of Irish statesmanship were the days of her oratorical brilliancy and her power in reply. The sparkle of the diamond was the test that vouched for the compact structure of the gem; and it was when Burke and Grattan thundered in the House

that the lightning of Sheridan's wit dazzled the dinner-table, and the brilliant flashes of Curran's genius lighted up the whole atmosphere of social life.

Talk of being old! I envy the man whose recollection can recall the days of such companionship; and I would rather live in the memory of these giants of old than go down to Star and Garter festivities with our puny jesters and small-fry epigrammatists.

These men's wit was but the subtilisation of their wisdom. In the marvellous chemistry of their minds they could so reduce the substance of long thought that it became capable of administration in the almost impalpable lightness of a jest, and they gave you in an epigram the matter of an epistle.

I must say no more on this theme lest some of my critics, as one has already done, should infer that I was already on the shady side of life at the time of the Union, and that it is out of a head racked with a century of reminiscences I have called forth these memories of by-gones.

Dining-out is much cultivated still in the Irish capital, and with no small success. There is a great deal of good looks, some actual beauty, excellent fish, and very tolerable claret. There is, besides—and long may it survive those scores of English imita-

tions Dublin affects—a hearty cordiality that greets you at the threshold, follows you to the drawing-room, goes with you to the dinner-table, and never leaves you till the last shake-hand at parting. Of this I know of no equal anywhere. England assuredly has nothing like it, nor has France, nor Germany, nor Russia, nor Italy. Nowhere that I have ever been have I felt the same atmosphere of kindly geniality—of that courtesy that will not be satisfied with mere politeness, but asks to be accepted as evidence of goodwill, even to friendship. What a priceless charm is shed over intercourse when this element of liking is diffused through it, when the magic of hospitality makes each guest imagine that he sits in a seat of honour, and is there through no mere ritual of a conventionality, but through the claim of real affection!

It was when coming home one night after one of these dinners I began to question myself whether, in sending a foreigner to Great Britain, I should advise him to begin or to end his experiences with Ireland. There was so much to be said for each mode of procedure, that I felt, as Lord Plunkett once said of a doubtful issue, “I’d like to have a hundred pounds to argue it either way.”

I believe the analogy of the Turkish bath decided me at last. Begin with the hot stage and end with

the cold ablution. It will be more invigorating, not to say that in the temperature you come out you will be fitter to deal with the rest of the world. Hence I say, Take out all your fervour in Ireland, and rely on it the wet-blanket that awaits you across the Channel will soon reduce you to the normal standard, and make you, if not as cool as a cucumber, as cool as a Cockney.

Perhaps I care more for all this than other people with "better regulated minds" would care. Perhaps long absence, perhaps peculiarity of temperament, dispose to make these cordial graces especially dear to me, giving them that character which, in native air, is supposed to retain all its virtue of curability. Perhaps I fancy that in such companionship I feel more myself, more sure of my own resources, more sensible of my own identity. Whatever the cause, I know that I never experience the same lightness of heart, the same capacity for enjoyment, the same readiness to employ whatever faculties I possess, as in Ireland; and as I walked through the old courts of Trinity the other day, I felt a thrill through me as though thirty hard years of struggle and conflict were no more than a troubled ocean, and that there I stood, as ready for heaven knows what of fun or frolic, of freshman's folly, and hot youth's wild gaiety, as when I lived yonder, over there, at No. 2

Chambers, with Frank Webber for my chum, and poor old Gannon—the junior Dean—over my head.

Amongst the most pleasing, though certainly amongst the saddest of my Irish experiences, was the every now and then meeting some grave and reverend signor, a judge mayhap, a law-adviser of the Crown, a vicar-general, or something as dignified, who had once been a member of a strange club, of which, in the hot days of youth, I was an ardent and very devoted upholder. We called ourselves Burschen, with as little resemblance to our German brethren as need be, and we supped together, and made speeches, and sang songs of our own making, and were altogether, as I then thought—and now, with thirty more years of life, still think—the wittiest, pleasantest, jolliest, and most *spirituel* fellows that ever sat round a punch-bowl. Our men were the pick of the learned professions, with a small sprinkling of country squires; and if I only could point out the careers which many of them made in after life—the honours they won, and the high rewards they attained to—it would be seen of what stuff that brilliant youth consisted, who chorused the charter-song of our order, “The Pope he leads a happy life.” Oh dear, when I think of writing that song, and bringing it down to the club, and teaching my comrades the grand old German

Lied, I am half ready to believe that it was but yesterday we met; and I think I see the great meerschaum on the red cushion, the symbol of our union; and as my eyes grow dimmer, visions of the gay company in their scarlet waistcoats come thronging round me; and what fine generous hearts beat under those bright vests, and what good-fellowship linked us!

It was very fine fooling, let me tell you; and for a witty doggrel on the topic of the hour, a smart epigram, or a clever bit of drollery, all I have ever since met of *beaux esprits* in my own or in other countries, could not approach comparison with the "Burschen."

I met a few survivors of that *vieille garde*, and in the emotion with which they recalled those glorious nights, I could mark how bright these spots shone through all the dreary savannahs of life; how they clung to them, and treasured them, firmly persuaded that no accident, no hazard, no fortuitous concurrence of events, could ever bring together again such spirits as made the Burschenschaft. Let no one tell me that there is not a soul in a hearty, racy conviviality, and that in those gatherings where men who like each other blend emotions as they mingle in song, rising with the exaltation of the hour to interchange of friendly pledges, that in such there

is not a spirit of affectionate attachment that survives time and distance, so that he on the Himalaya shall toast him on the Baltic coast, and the ice-bound sailor in Behring Strait remembers him who is roasting away under the sun of India.

For myself I can say, the sight of one of my old brethren of the Burschenschaft is such a renewal of gone-by triumphs as few actual pleasures can compete with. It is enough to bring up not alone youth, and its warm friendships and strong attachments, but hopes and high ambitions; and though these be not realised in my own case, I can look around me and think how many of those who were amongst our wittiest and best have lived to charm larger audiences and be the delight of more widespread circles than gathered around the board of the Burschen.

In a city so eminently hospitable as Dublin, it must be exceedingly difficult for any Viceroy to represent adequately the high duties that pertain to his station as a host. Where every one entertains, and entertains too at his best, what can the Lord-Lieutenant do to make his receptions distinctive? Certain men endowed with great graces of manner and demeanour were able to infuse the charm of their personality into their hospitalities, but for the most part Viceroys have relied upon their dig-

nity for their social success; and there is a something of Brummagem about the Castle and its officials which to a fun-loving people like the Irish invariably suggests more matter for ridicule than reverence. Indeed, I have heard it gravely propounded that if the Lord-Lieutenancy were to be withdrawn there would be nothing left to laugh at in Ireland.

So far, then, from curtailing, I would increase its splendours. I would restore the privileges and honours of which time has robbed it. There should be ladies in waiting and maids of honour, as well as male followers. Glass-coach days, boards of green cloth, knightings, and suchlike, should be of more frequent occurrence. The affectation of distinguished Englishmen to play the high-comedy part with a melodramatic gravity is downright insufferable. They know well, or they might know if they do not, that the whole is *pour rire*, and that though we mere Irish pretend to cling to it as a remembrance of our once greatness, a souvenir of a time when our city was a metropolis, we like it better for its blunders, its mock magnificence, its fictitious greatness, and its real insignificance.

The Irishman is the only man in Europe who could laugh at the mistake of the pilot who was wrecking the ship he was aboard of; and in this

way he enjoys with a racy drollery the blunders that actually lead to disasters. Fun has a stronger hold on his nature than fate, and you may always pinch his diet if you give him food for a joke.

The women dress better in Dublin than formerly. There is less of that over-decoration about the head, and that neglect of the lower extremities, which poor Thackeray remarked on. In the evening there was far more "freshness" in toilette than I remember of old. They dance, too, with great grace, and all the more to their praise that they have the most execrable ball-music in Christendom. As to good looks, there is not a city of Europe can compete with Dublin. The brows and eyes are of exceeding beauty, the tint of skin and hair is exquisite; the mouth is weak, the chin ill-marked; indeed, it is in the lower part of the Irish face in persons of condition that all that is deficient in expression is found. Amongst the peasants the lower jaw is only too much charged with meaning, and the meaning, ferocity.

I was consoled for the insult that has denied a Volunteer force to Ireland by remarking how comparatively clean shaven were young Irishmen. Clerks in the custom-house were not, as I have seen elsewhere, got up to resemble the Imperial Guard; nor were respectable shopmen like *Sapeurs*.

And now I want to say a word about the Exhibition, and I have no time, for my portmanteau is packed, my bill paid, and, as the waiter informs me, Mr O'Dowd's carriage is at the door.

I am truly sorry to go. I have a sort of lurking fear that I am looking at that old College Park for the last time; that I am taking a long adieu of these *cari luoghi* where as a youth I was wont to saunter of afternoons in that peripatetic flirtation which we freshmen cultivated, singeing our poor wings till we were left past flying. Oh dear! is there a stone in Dame Street we have not sighed over?

"You'll be late, sir," whispers the waiter, and I'm off.

O'DOWD'S EXPERIENCES

"EN VOYAGE"—ACT II.

THE night was rough as I crossed the Channel, and though I slept tolerably well, I awoke at times to hear a somewhat active discussion carried on by a party of four, whose accents unmistakably declared them from the north of Ireland. So' far as my unwilling ears compelled me to overhear, I gathered that they were Belfast men going over to be examined, or to tender instruction to others about to be examined, as to the late riots in that city.

One of them was evidently a person of some importance, either locally or officially. He was a fat, red-faced, bold man, with an expression of blended bull-dog and purse-pride that haunted me through my dreams; and in the deference shown him by the others, and his own assumption thereupon, there was that which, added to an expression he constantly

employed—"I am ready to do much for Belfast"—kept me in a state not far from fever.

If there were only three like him in the Town Council, I can well imagine the city becoming the scene of lawless outrage and savagery. His Dogberry insistance, his violence, and his self-conceit were worse to me than the tossing of the boat and the head-wind; and the refrain of "much for Belfast" rang through my brain amid all the turmoil and trouble of the sea. Punch, too, stimulated his patriotism, and by the time we reached Holyhead he was eminently calculated to do much for Belfast, for he could do nothing at all for himself.

I believe it is fated that by whatever way we approach London some incongruous sight or hideous object should appear to mar the effect and injure the impression which the greatest city of the world ought to produce on the beholder. This is peculiarly the case as you cross the river to the new Charing Cross Station, and in which the Houses of Parliament and Westminster Abbey are totally effaced by that monster of ugliness—that gigantic telescope tube—that forms the new station. Indeed, it may be feared that Exhibition Palaces and vast railway stations will be the grave of all architecture. Perhaps bee-hives and mole-hills should be the appropriate types for the homes and haunts of an industrial people, far more

eager in the pursuit of wealth than careful to display themselves in a picturesque attitude.

I think we have a notion, too, that a certain ugliness is essential to all this practical and business life; and just as we hate to see a city man deeply immersed in affairs come out as a dandy, we are satisfied to have the haunts of our industry made as shapeless, as monstrous, and as tasteless, as a refined ingenuity can devise them. The Charing Cross Station, then, must be deemed a great success to the lovers of this school. Glass, iron, and asphalt have combined in it to do their very utmost towards deformity.

I do not know how much longer the smaller hotels are likely to hold their own against these immense caravanseries which are springing up around us; but I own that they have a great attraction for me in their quietness, their order, and in the absence of those imposing details of accommodation which larger establishments demand, and where the guest has to learn almost as much as the head-waiter; and, for my own part, I am free to confess that I arrive in general far too much fatigued at the end of my journey to care to perfect myself in the manifestoes which are framed and glazed about my room, or to cultivate my faculties in the telegraphic system of signals which summon the housemaid or ask for hot water.

I am content to abide by a bell-rope to ring, and a little patience to respond to it; and I never can divest my head of the notion that of those black-coated ushers, who move about with massive chains round their necks, I am destined to find more reminiscences in my "bill" than are altogether agreeable. On the whole, I am disposed to think that the overdone splendour of decoration, and the enormous amount of attendance, are devised rather to captivate those whose habitual mode of life is peculiarly modest and quiet than for such as are accustomed to more of daily luxury and comfort. To the former, a short absence from home in one of these gilded palaces like the Langham or the Grand Hotel must be a sort of enchanted existence. To lounge on silk and be served on silver—to be waited on by an official more imposingly dignified than his own uncle, must have its ecstatic delight for Jones, and impart an amount of enjoyment to his journey far more intense than what he derives from strange sights and sounds—a new place and a new people. What convinces me of this is that these over-gorgeous establishments are the peculiar haunts of the Americans. It is the Yankee who delights in the thousand appliances of modern luxury. It is the rough son of toil who has made his bed on the hard ground, and himself split the log over which he has cooked his own dinner, that

loves to sleep on a down mattress, and feed on turtle; and there is no feature of these splendid saloons so striking as the disparity between the furniture and the company.

I was glad to find myself in the old Burlington again, so quiet, so orderly, and so scrupulously clean, compared with one of the new-fangled hotels. It was the repose of a country-house after the bustle of a railway station. Your individuality, too, has its respect in these smaller houses. You are not merely 412 or 510—you are Mr Y., or Mr X. Your breakfast is served like a meal, not given out as a ration; and in the respectful smile of the waiter as he hands you the 'Times,' you have a recognition that you are an admitted member of the great human family, and not a mere accident of humanity with a carpet-bag.

I maintain, too, that you breakfast and dine better in one of these smaller hotels. There is more care taken about the *matériel*, and the cookery is to the full as good. The superiority of the wine is incontestable.

I do not know how it may be with others, but to myself I own a noisy coffee-room is peculiarly disagreeable. There is a decorous solemnity about meal-times which is cruelly jarred on by loud speech or active discussion. When you have disposed the 'Morning Post' against the tea-urn, you want quiet-

ness to peruse its columns, far more than to hear how Brown got out of that scrape with the Colonel, or what Jones did at Cremorne. I hope I am not cursed with more irritable nerves than my neighbours, but I have to confess that the disjointed bits of conversation of strangers around me generally jar upon me most unpleasantly. The small drolleries you would have laughed at from your friends, come to your ears in this way as violations of all taste and all morality. Sensible remarks sound as dreary commonplaces, and little jokes, not too bad to laugh at, appear the most dreary attempt at fun, all because you know nothing of the speakers, have no interest in their natures or their lives, and are even ignorant of their names.

And this may show us what a good thing is that which we call sympathy—how tolerant it makes us—how human! How well it repays us for all we cede to it, and what an admirable investment we make when we like our neighbours!

I have summed up all I can say of London, when I say that it was as new to me, just as noisy, as confounding, as addling, as exciting, as tantalising, and never satisfying, as when first I saw it, thirty-odd years ago.

Just as I feel the roll of the Atlantic is the finest bathing in the world if you be a strong swimmer,

so do I believe there is nowhere like London to live in if you be rich enough. It's very poor fun, though, if you can only scramble and struggle, hold on by another, or shout for a life-belt. In such sad plight as this, I fancy, I am just as well in shallow water, stagnant though it be, and a little muddy at bottom.

To be rich enough for London means to be able to enjoy the best society of Europe, in the midst of more material comforts than ever met together elsewhere. "*Non contigit cuique*" to live in Park Lane, however; and fortunately for us, small minnows of the great fish-pond, there are little pools and rivulets where we can disport ourselves very pleasantly, and where none of us is so ill mannered as to hint at there being such creatures as whales. Now, though I cannot afford a box at the opera, I should like to go occasionally, of an extra night say; so I would be well pleased if Fortune permitted me now and then to visit this marvellous place for a week or so, to cross over the great bridges—lounge in its parks—eat its fish-dinners—hear a good debate in the House—or, better still, listen to a good dinner conversation, such as I have heard many lately.

I certainly enjoyed myself more in England than I ever remember doing before; and I am graceless enough to believe that I owe it to myself, mainly at

least, and for this reason, that I found there were scores of things which once on a time used to irritate and annoy that now vexed me no longer. Whether it was that when younger the current of life was more turbulent in its very buoyancy, or that a craving ambition to be something, or to do something, quite beyond me, left me restless and fevered, but so it was. I always found myself in London very cross that I was not rich, that I had not a house in Piccadilly and a seat in Parliament, that I was not as much sought after as this, or as much in request as that other; in fact, that I was such a mere "waif" there was no one so poor as to claim me. Well, time has rolled on and made me no better—far from it, only so much older, more wayworn, and more stupid; but as a sort of compensation it has made me more patient. I no longer fret that my place is below the salt; the fare is very good after all, and scores of pleasant fellows, I well know how much better than myself, sit there also. Our own fault is it, if we keep our eyes on those at the head of the table, and long for the costly viands that are served to them; our diet is good and wholesome, and very pleasant is the company who partake of it.

I recognise in the world now innumerable traits of kindliness, good nature, good feeling, and genero-

sity, that I should once have denied it. I am certain when men are in good health the right predominates in their nature over the wrong; and I am equally sure that to enjoy this conviction, a man must arrive at the no less wholesome conviction that he himself has got fully as much as he deserves from his fellow-men. Now, it was this same sentiment acting in a variety of ways that made me enjoy London immensely. I had lived long enough in the world to survive many delusions of my own weaving. And I have also come to find out that there is much of solid good—much that is worthy and much that is amiable—in many things that I once disparaged, just as if a man who, having kept by him the notes of a broken bank, were one day to be told that the concern was paying a dividend. There you have at once something of what I experienced in London.

So far as my opportunities extended, I should say that they dine better in England than of yore, they talk better, and they dress better. I don't think the House of Commons so eloquent as I once remember it; and I am sure that the drama is just as dull, and the acting as intensely vulgar as ever; but what is to be done with an audience who never laugh except at old jokes that they are used to, and must have their drollery, as infants have their food, made easy for mastication before it reaches them?

There is more beauty amongst the women, and more boredom amongst the men of England, than in all the rest of Christendom. The official people are a pestilence of pomposity and dulness that overlays the nation like a sea-fog, and there is no human thing I hold in so much dread as a Government chief-clerk, except it be the little man with the long body and the gauze spectacles, who sits at the door of the House of Commons and flings back your card so disdainfully when you have omitted the name of the member you fain would ask to protect you.

I don't know how I should feel in the body of the House, but if the Speaker were to renew in me the mingled awe and abhorrence with which he of the blue gauze inspires me, I am almost glad that I have not a seat amongst the collective wisdom of Great Britain.

As to the House itself, I believe I can understand why it is that foreigners generally are so very little impressed by its forms or by its appearance. It is eminently commonplace—the dignity of a few does not leaven the mass, and the mass, there is no denying it, have a sort of vestry-quarter-session-like air, that is neither distinctive nor elevated. Nor is it the abode of high eloquence. I heard what I was informed was an animated debate. It was on the Catholic Oaths Bill. Perhaps I expected too much

—perhaps (and I suppose it may be the better “perhaps”) I have too little experience of the forms of these discussions to know the class of arguments that are effective; but it certainly seemed to me that the speakers always took a very low estimate of the question they supported, advocated their opinions from low grounds, and appealed to very small sympathies besides.

Compared with a good debate in the French Chamber, the speaking, as speaking, was very inferior. I am told, and I am willing to believe, that in proportion as we are illogical we are practical, and that our national good sense is never so very conspicuous as when we do something that no amount of casuistry could maintain.

My very brief experience as a listener under the gallery sent me away thinking that all the fluent men were the feeble ones, and that the two or three bungling stammering speakers had really something to say, if they could only hit upon the way to say it. Very poor jokes had a great success, but there was little mercy extended to solemn stupidity, and the grave bore was treated with much indignity.

On the whole, I think I'd rather read of them all in my 'Times' than hear them; and though I am free to own it would be a great triumph to my

amour propre to be able to pass on before my friend of the gauze spectacles uninterrogated and unstopped, I suspect that, after the first burst of exultation were over, I am just as well off here under my vines and fig-trees.

I have heard it said that able men, when gathered into a compact union, by no means maintain the great superiority which their separate and individual excellence would seem to warrant; at the same time, that inferior capacities benefit immensely by amalgamation; and thus is it parliaments disappoint and military messes astonish us. I leave this problem to wiser heads than my own—and, I hope, even to a cooler season than the present—to decide upon.

One thing there was which never ceased to surprise me, the great uniformity of thought and sentiment in each of the two great party divisions of the empire. Every man and every woman either thought Mr Gladstone a phoenix of statecraft or an infuriated dangerous democrat. Each saw in Lord Russell the hope of English foreign policy, or a meddling, obstructive, obtrusive minister—ever offering unwanted advice, and whenever snubbed and insulted, pointing to his patience under indignity as the sign of a pacific policy:—the avowed respect of all sides for Lord Palmerston only showing how far more

essential it is that a ruler of men should understand human nature—its many-sided moods—than that he should be a great orator, a great financier, a great rhetorician, or a profound thinker.

It says a good deal for the man, it says something for the nation, when qualities such as his should have this immense success—when the sentiment of the “family” should so extend to a whole people, that they would consent to be governed by the same sort of homely dictates as would apply to a household. What a precious gift is this same geniality! How it binds up together, too, a mass of other qualities—a sort of moral “annular ligament” that imparts strength and symmetry together!

The man who, with an instinctive rapidity, can say what scores of other men separated from him in class, station, and sentiment will pronounce upon any measure—how they will regard it, what hope and what fear from it—whether dread its consequences or laugh at its provisions,—such a man will always have great qualities for the leadership of an assembly like the House of Commons.

And it is in this very fact we see the vast superiority of the House to every other parliamentary assembly in Europe. In England, Parliament is a living thing. It is not a debating society, nor an arena; it is a thing of human feelings and passions.

It has a heart—a somewhat hard heart at times—but it never ceases to beat boldly and bravely. I have never met with but one foreign statesman who either could comprehend this characteristic, or who could himself, had he been born an Englishman, have displayed in his own person the advantages of our system. This was Cavour. Cavour would have been as great in Westminster as he was in the Palazzo Carignano. Indeed, I am by no means certain England would not have been to such a man his truest, most appropriate field of action.

How well the women ride in the Park! how easily—how jauntily—how confidently! How little does that hot-tempered chestnut interrupt the attention that pale girl with the blonde ringlets is bestowing on the whiskered cavalier at her side! and how pleasantly that laugh rings out from her yonder, whose mettlesome grey plunges like a fish! They sit like centaurs. I can't say as much in praise of their "hands"—some are "hard"—almost all are careless. Now the fact is, riding, like whist, demands an undivided attention. You must be a perfect master of either. You must, so to say, have imbibed every precept and every knack into your system as a part of yourself, before you can dare to divert your attention from either your horse or your "hand."

Not talk because I'm on horseback—not flirt because my mare is a buck-leaper! Oh! Mr O'Dowd, you are not serious? I am, my dear Julia, perfectly serious; and I say if the nag be worth riding, he will require far more of your watchfulness and devotion than you are disposed to withdraw from Cornet Blaze of the Blues.

Mind, I do not pretend that you will either smash his knees or be thrown. I do not anticipate any serious mishap to your horse or yourself. I only say you will do both your dumb beasts more justice if you will think of your hand when you are "out," and of your heart when you come home.

And why do I give you these counsels? Because you are not alone more beautiful and more graceful, more charmingly feminine and more fascinating in every way, than all the other women in Europe; but you are more sweet-voiced and more gentle, and ten thousand times more lovable, than them all, Be perfection, then—and it is so easy for you! And when you only remember how lamentably devoid of any individual interest in these counsels is he who gives them—he who only saw you passing by, and may never see you again—take them at least forgivingly.

I had a number of things in my head a minute ago

about fish-dinners, railroad smashes, poisoning, Mr Fechter, and ‘The Owl,’ but these charming canterers have scampered off with me, and I am away over imaginary prairies, and I know I shall never be back in time for the post.

THE ADAMS-RUSSELL CORRESPONDENCE.

WHAT would be said if any member of our Legislature should propose a law to make a bootmaker responsible, in a second degree, for any breach of the peace incurred by a gentleman who, at the time of the offence, was shod in a pair of boots of *his* making? What would be said if, besides the natural inquiry into the solvency of his customer, the shoemaker was required to investigate his character, his morals, his temper, what sort of company he frequented, and what were the usual measures to which he resorted when carried away by passion or excitement?

What would be said if, besides all these, the bootmaker was obliged to ascertain with what object his customer ordered the toes to be pointed, and the soles heavy? Had he, the customer, any secret intentions of violence? Was he compassing to kick somebody? and were these directions of his given

in evil-mindedness and *malice prepense*? What would be said if the bootmaker was not merely to occupy himself with the details of his business, but was bound to see that in no possible eventuality could any work of his hands ever come into the possession of choleric people, or be diverted from the peaceful paths in which good citizens love to walk?

And what would be said if, with the knowledge that two neighbours were living on bad terms, constantly jarring, and in all likelihood coming to overt acts of violence, he, the bootmaker aforesaid, was legally obliged to refuse boots for either of them of more than average strength, lest by any accident they should employ them in personal encounter?

Would not the effect of all this cumbrous legislation be, that a bootmaker would have very little time left him to make boots, but would have to devote his days, and probably his nights, to all the difficult and nice contingencies in which his unhappy business might involve him, ever speculating whether he were legally safe in that strong upper leather, or what disastrous consequences might ensue to him from those heavy nails in the heel?

Would it seem very unnatural and unreasonable in him to say, "I am a bootmaker, not a police constable. I manufacture shoes for my customers, but I do not pretend to guide the footsteps. My busi-

ness is, that they be well shod. I have no pretension to take care that they be well mannered. I may be sincerely sorry that Mr Such-a-one is on bad terms with the gentleman next door, but I feel in no way bound to reduce the thickness of his soles, or round off the toes of his boots, as a measure of precaution in the event of his kicking him. Nor do I feel called upon to detain the last pair he has ordered, on the impression that they are stronger than gentlemen ordinarily wear, and convey a suspicious notion that they are meant for something besides walking."

This, in a brief space, is the sum and substance of that dispute in which Lord Russell and Mr Adams are now engaged, and with which our newspapers are filled—a very dreary correspondence, restricting the space that might have been so pleasantly occupied by the cattle disease and that interesting controversy as to whether bagmen should drink wine. Nor is the analogy complete without adding that the unhappy bootmaker, after having served one customer for years, is suddenly informed that this gentleman has quarrelled with another, and he, the bootmaker, is thereby debarred from ever obtaining that other gentleman's custom, because his former client desires heartily to see him go barefoot; or if that be impossible, that he should never have anything thicker than dancing-pumps.

I don't want to pretend that our excellent boot-maker, Mr Laird of Liverpool, was in ignorance that two of his customers were at loggerheads, and exchanged kicks whenever they met. I only assert that his business limited itself to the fact that the boots they kicked with should be good strong serviceable boots, and that whoever paid best should have the strongest soles and the heaviest nails.

Mr Adams—the wordiness of his despatch removed, and its numerous Gallicisms omitted, writes thus:—"You behaved ill, because, when you saw that we had a hold of that gentleman by the nose, and that he was tugging at our hair, you exclaimed, 'These parties are fighting.' This was unbecoming; it was unfriendly; it was indecent. Your experience ought to have taught you that it was only a shindy; that when we had mauled each other to our mutual satisfaction, some one would have suggested a third party we could both have fallen upon, and in this way our dispute would have been amicably arranged, and we would have gone hand in hand to Canada or Cuba, or Heaven knows where. You might have known that, though we have no objection to hard knocks, we like dollars better, and it would have been far more friendly on your part not to call your neighbour to the window to look out at the row, and make him also say—as the French Emperor did

say—"I declare they are fighting." This alone made the row serious; indeed, neither of us stripped to the fight till we saw we were looked at.

"Secondly, when you saw we were at it, you were just as ready to supply shoes to the other party as to ourselves; strong shoes, with nails at the toes, that you well knew meant mischief.

"It is perfectly clear to us, that if you had left us to our own shoemakers, who work up second-hand materials, and turn out what is called shoddy, we might have kicked each other till doomsday, and never hurt our shins. It was your confounded strong soles did all the harm, and you've got to pay the bill for it now."

So far Adams. Russell now loquitur. "It may have been a delusion on our part; we were a long way off, and didn't see the thing very clearly; but, on my honour as a gentleman, we thought you were fighting.

"As to the boots, we make them for everybody. We make them for people of all persuasions, according to order; and such thorough tradesmen are we, we have made them for Russia when she wanted to kick our own shins, and very sharp knocks did she give us of our own manufacture. In fact, of late we care very little whether we do not go barefoot ourselves, so that we drive a thriving trade with others,

always thinking, perhaps erroneously, we can turn out a few strong pairs whenever it is necessary. All, therefore, we ask is, not to be angry with us ; we only desire to be let gain a decent livelihood, like respectable tradesmen ; and, lastly, if you talk of your little bill, we have one also."

In a postscript he adds : "You can tell your employer with 'the remarkable powers,' that I was your faithful well-wisher all through the struggle—a sentiment not the less to be valued in me, that it was opposed to the vast majority of my countrymen ; and that if I could have done anything illegal without being discovered, I'd have certainly done it to assist you.

"To yourself, confidentially, I may say, I got plenty of ill-will at home here through my partisanship for your cause, and I think it certainly somewhat hard that you should send this account in to *me*, well knowing as you do how my friendship for you has jeopardised my good name and my estimation with all my countrymen."

A NEW BENEFIT SOCIETY.

WE are eminently a provident people. The virtue belongs to us as a race, and is impressed upon us by the vicissitudes of our climate. In fact, our lives are essentially devoted to preparing against certain casualties; or which, when it is impossible to avert them, we endeavour to render as little damaging as may be.

If any proof of the fact were needed, we have it in the enormous number of our assurance companies, which, in the variety of object, would seem to embrace almost every contingency that can befall a man or his property. We insure against malady in all shapes, against water and against fire, against the effects of climate and collisions on the rail. No sooner, indeed, has any new form of calamity presented itself in these islands, than straightway up starts a company ready, and on most tempting

terms, to assure you against its consequences, and actually invest misfortune with the interest of a game on which you have taken the long odds.

Of all these associations, none please me so much as what they call Benefit Societies, whose members, by a small periodical payment, secure to themselves a certain weekly allowance when, either by the accidents of ill-health or the vicissitudes of trade, they are out of employment.

It is not the mere help in times of pressure that I admire, however essential that may be. What I like in these fraternities is the peculiar training they disseminate, the habit of prudent forethought, the spirit of cautious forbearance, in times of prosperity, in the consciousness that the road of life has its dark days as well as its bright ones, and that, however favourably Fortune may fill our sails to-day, we may yet have to beat, and tack, and lie-to, and struggle against head-winds and rough seas, braving storm and hurricane, and well content to gain our port at last with split sail and shattered cordage.

I like this spirit, I say; and I am certain it is an admirable moral training.

There is also another view well worth regarding. These small weekly payments in "hard times" are just enough to elevate a man out of the pressure,

and, what is fully as bad, the indignity of poverty. The tradesman is not driven, as without them he might be, to labour of an inferior order, and labour which might very possibly unfit him for the future exercise of his own calling. The man has not to suffer in that tenderest of all points, his self-esteem; he is not to experience any sense of degradation because trade is dull and workshops are closed.

It is with a close reference to each and all of these conditions that I have been thinking what an admirable thing it would be to apply these Benefit Societies to the world of Politics, and enable those men, who of all others gain the most precarious of all livelihoods, to secure the means of existence, when, by a change of Government or a reconstruction of party, they are thrown upon the world helpless and unprovided for.

Take an Under-Secretary in the House, for instance, generally a young man of promise and fair abilities. He may have left the ranks of the bar, diplomacy, literature, or some other career, dazzled—not at all unreasonably—by the rank, the dignity, and the emoluments of office, to stand up in his place and defend something in the Colonies or the Board of Trade. To talk ethnologically of a savage race in the tropics, or philosophise commercially of

some naked populations who have taken to printed calicoes, is a great bribe to a young and ardent mind, new to quarter-day, and fresh from the debating society; and it would not be fair to expect that a noble enthusiasm like this could strain itself to look beyond the horizon of office, and see the dark and dreary hemisphere where Opposition sits, cold, chilled, and comfortless.

Of course, these generous youths never dream of a time when the great party will be "out." They can no more imagine the nation without them, than they can speculate on the appearance our earth would present the day after being scorched up by the comet.

Older, sager heads think of these things—I believe they seldom think of anything else—but they think of them calmly and moderately. Their long experience has taught them not to trust too far the many-headed monster called Parliament. They know that divisions are ticklish things, and that even whippers-in are occasionally mistaken. They feel, in short, that he who treads public life in a Parliamentary country, walks on the very thinnest of ice, and risks not only a fall but a ducking. But above all this they know that, whether they sit right or left of the Speaker's chair, they are great people in the nation's eye, and that the prestige of

having governed the country is a distinction never to be effaced.

The younger men of office have none of these sustaining reflections. They borrow all their lustre from their place; and when the evil day of an adverse division arrives, they are the most helpless and pitiable of all creatures.

As Under-Secretaries, they are cognate numbers in the arithmetic of party. They get up their little statistics, and they come down to the House with a despatch-box, and they slam the doors at Whitehall in the face of the small clerks, and they accord audiences just like their chiefs. They assume the official face, the *facies Hippocratica* of office—the little smile of unbelief, or the cold stare of astonishment. In a word, they are as like the real thing as nickel is to Hall-marked silver.

Very dreadful is it for men like these to come down to the obscurities of private life, where there is neither official stationery nor Queen's messenger, and, worse than these, no Quarter-day. Very sad is it to descend to a station which can neither assume special means of knowledge, nor decline to give certain documents to the House. These things are not pleasant, for I verily believe that dogs in office are actually vain of their collars.

In the late cotton crisis in this country, it was

painfully proved that to subject men habituated to skilled labour—to the sort of employment which required nicety of touch and lightness of hand—to the coarse work of the daily labourer, was to unfit them materially, if not completely, for all their former occupations; so that by the self-same calamity that broke down the moral man, was the physical man reduced to a condition of social inferiority. Apply this reasoning to the case before us, and ask yourselves, What is to become of a class which, the moment their subsistence is withdrawn, are totally unfitted for every known occupation or employment?

It would be very painful to contemplate Lord Clarence Paget or Mr Layard picking even a figurative oakum, or breaking imaginary stones on the highroad.

The dignity of official life requires that public functionaries should not, in the hour of adversity, be driven to those occupations which should injure that delicacy of touch so essential to the men of office. We ought to take care that, in the language of Manchester, "the Hands" do not deteriorate.

I forbear to lay stress upon the grander independence, the higher tone of political dignity, that would result from the consciousness that Place was not an actual necessity of existence. I think I hear

the conscious pride of the man who says, "Sir, my vote to-day may very possibly displease those with whom it has been the pride and honour of my political life to serve. I may, it is more than likely, by the opinions I have submitted to the House, incur the blame of men whom I regard with equal veneration and affection. Nay, more, sir; it may happen that, by the independent course I have adopted in this measure, I may have unfitted myself for that confidential intercourse with my colleagues, so essential to the unity and strength of all government. If so, sir, I can only say that I retire into the obscurity of private life, with," &c. &c. &c. I almost fancy I hear the cheers that drown the concluding words, and make the peroration—as all perorations ought to be—in audible.

What an alleviation to the evil day of a "turn-out" would be the certainty of falling back on one's twelve or fifteen shillings a-week! I speak figuratively, for I am comparing them with the mechanics. What a resource, I say, would it be in the dark hour of Opposition to know that a man need not go back to his legation or his penny-a-lining, become a no-paid secretary or an ill-paid scribe, and that when the doors of Downing Street closed against him, those of the Benefit Society opened!

What a zeal would it impart, too, to the society to

keep their own partisans in office, instead of having them as pensioners on the company! What an admirable agency for party might grow out of the institution! Why, the very share-list would be the barometer of national opinion; and one could see at a glance whether Whigs were "dull" or Tories "lively."

Last of all, if we had institutions like these, Gladstone could tax them; and I know of nothing so thoroughly English as to create an industry and then tax it. This is what we call "extending the area of our commercial relations," and it is always mentioned in a Queen's Speech.

It is needless to say that, were societies like these in operation, it would be no longer necessary, on the going out of an Administration, to make those indecent appointments to permanent office we occasionally witness—grinding down under-secretaries into commissioners, and converting supernumerary clerks into consuls. "Go to your society," would say the First Lord, "and let us fervently hope you may not long be a burden on their resources."

IN RETIREMENT.

WHEN I had got back over the Alps after that brief glance of London life and manners of which I ventured a passing word in these pages, my first care was to seek out some quiet spot—a tranquil corner—wherein I might meditate over all I had so lately seen and heard, and, what was fully as important to me, bring my mind back to those routine ways of thought which constitute, at the same time, the labour and the happiness of my life. For, let me confess it to you, dear reader, you are far more the complement of my existence than I ever was, or could hope to be, of yours. I owe to you, and the share of attention and interest you bestow upon me, not alone the energy and the wish to please you, but an unceasing desire so to employ my faculties that I may keep the place in your esteem you have vouchsafed me, and as I grow in years grow more worthy of your favour.

It was to talk to you that I first suggested these O'Dowderies—to have an opportunity of saying, without any thought as to the manner, or any study as to the expression, something about the scores of things which are every day turning up amongst us—to talk to you in all the freedom of intimacy, and to try if I could not infuse into our intercourse that genial sentiment that comes of a trustful freedom on one side, and a most generous and indulgent good-nature on the other.

In a word, I desired to be as much at my ease with you as though you had been sitting with me under the vine-woven trellis where I write these lines, and amid the puffs of your cuban, nodding me a kindly assent to something I have told you.

Almost every man who has seen much of life has something to say about it, which if not positively new or original, yet may not have been said in his way or with his words. As the flavour of the cask imparts its quality to the liquor, so will the individuality tinge opinion. Now, I never assumed to have seen or heard more than my neighbours; all I pretended was, that what I had seen or heard I have done with my own eyes and ears; and what I related of these experiences I had told in my own way—a very wayward and discursive way at times, but never a forced, never an assumed way. To make a

clean breast of it, good reader, I began these sketches of life and manners pretty much as some drawing-room musician is persuaded by his friends to go on the stage, assured that the soft cadences that charmed the polite circle of his acquaintance will find favour with the public. So have I been talking for twenty-odd years the sort of thing you have lately been gracious enough to read; and it was only t'other day a friend remarked to me, "It is your best wares, Cornelius, you have never brought to market. Your letters are better than your books. Try if you couldn't write that anecdote just as you have told it to me." Ah, that is the real difficulty. The pleasant freedom of the voice, the happy union of cadence and gesture, the spontaneity that comes of self-reliance as one feels his success,—where are these in presence of your ink-bottle and your foolscap? No, there's no doing the thing in that fashion; all the ingenious contrivances that ever were invented never imparted to the corked-up flask of Vichy or Carlsbad the invigorating freshness of the waters as they bubbled and sparkled from the fountain; and though I try to make my liquor like Allsopp's ale—strong enough to bear a voyage—I feel how I injure the flavour of my tap by the adulteration.

Very full of these considerations, very eager to

carry them into practice, if I could but find the way, I set about thinking of where I should settle down as a meet spot to recover the lost balance of my mind, swung out of its equilibrium by London flatteries and fish-dinners, and call myself back from the glories of polished banter and whitebait to the peaceful pleasures of my own thoughts.

I knew of such a place, one of those lonely nooks, a cleft between the mountains, widening as you enter into a bay, watered by the blue sea, and sheltered by foliage of every shape and colour, from the oak to the olive. One of those places which, seen at sunrise, golden and pink streaked, in the hot blaze of noon, or in the stillness of a starry night, with the sea a-glitter with golden glories, you cannot say to what peculiar aspect you attach the highest sense of beauty; such a blending is there of softness and sublimity, so grand and yet so homely, for it is eminently a place to live in—to dream in—to float along existence as one skims the still sea, waveless, almost windless, deliciously tranquil on all sides.

Hither I came, with such resolutions too! What was I not to do? I apportioned out my whole day, from my first morning swim, ere the sea grew hot and fiery, to my last row at night, when the land-breeze came through the orange groves. I was to work too, if that be the name for the sort of thing I

do ; that irresponsible excursion over the notes of the human piano that never rises to the dignity of a melody, and stops short at a chord, or dies away in a cadence. I was, however, to work, in so far as jotting down my fancies might mean work. I was to muster out the ragged army of my recollections, and brigade them with the new levies of my late experiences, and "march past" with what pomp I might.

It has been a sort of lifelong delusion with me, that some time or other I was to chance upon a certain spot so lovely, so beautiful, so satisfying in all the requirements of scenery and tranquillity, so full of natural beauty, and so removed from all intrusive boredom, that I was to do I know not what wonderful things, not merely better than what I had yet done, but far and away above what any one suspected me capable of ; for, of course, I could not have been before the world thirty years without the fervent conviction that I was only half understood, half appreciated.

Yes, said I, I will heat both boilers, and get full steam up, and the world shall see at last the speed that is in me. I have never yet tried "the measured mile" under fair circumstances ; either the weather has been unfavourable, my craft out of trim, or my "bearings have been heated," which may mean my temper ruffled.

At last, however, is the time come for me to assert myself, and with this assurance down I went to my little bay. I know not how it may be with other people, but to myself there is a wonderful charm in beginning anything. There is a smack of youthfulness about the idea of a fair start that is wonderfully captivating. I enjoy my soup at dinner with not merely the relish due to its own flavour, but with a foretaste of joys to come. I glory in the first burst and the first fence in a hunting-field. The first squall that sends my boat gunwale under, gives me a thrill of mingled ecstasy and fear, more exquisitely exciting than a whole day's experiences of escape and peril. The mere fact of beginning, therefore, sent its sense of enjoyment through me, though not fully certain upon what topic I was about to amuse or instruct humanity.

Subjects had been cropping up since I last wrote. I was not, of course, going to touch the Negro nor Schleswig-Holstein. President Johnson and Count Bismarck were both safe. As little was I disposed to treat of the French Emperor. These are the stock pieces of the world's drama—every one has seen them to satiety. Politics had fallen asleep; and the only speaker was that irrepressible bore Mr Roebuck, who is tolerable on the one sole condition that he makes himself ridiculous.

There were, however, some themes on which one might compose variations. There was Mr Moens and the Brigands, to whom I could not help applying Churchill's lines—

“ Inhuman monsters ! was it not a shame
To hurt a man so harmless and so tame ? ”

for in all my human experiences, I never forgathered with a less aggressive or more peaceful mortal. There was then the Grand Anglo-Gallic Fraternisation—that affectionate meeting of two friends to show each other their duelling-pistols, as the surest and safest guarantee of mutual respect and forbearance.

When Robert Macaire and his father-in-law each discover that the other can cheat as well as himself, they lay down the cards and embrace, saying, *Nous sommes frères*. This is the essence and spirit of our French fraternisation. Now, I have no objection to the league, if it only be rightly understood. I avow frankly and openly that there could be no such disaster to humanity as a war between England and France. All I ask is, let the peace stand on the ground that it really rests on—mutual convenience and advantage. Let there be no pretence of that love that does not exist, and that esteem of which there is not even a shadow.

In the overwhelming self-conceit and self-esteem of his nature, John Bull fancies he must be liked if

he be but known, and so sure is he of reciprocity that he gives his friendship as he gave free-trade, fully assured that he would get as good as he gave; and it is only when pinched by a restrictive tariff that he begins to perceive that the foreigner had another and different measure than *his*. In the very spirit of this free-trade policy, John offered his friendship duty-free, and France responded by politeness. Now, friendship and politeness are not the same, but they represent exactly what we give to France and get back in return.

Don't imagine the French like you—don't lay the flattery to your hearts that they understand, or, if they understood, would care for, the really good qualities you possess. The things they give you credit for are your not very graceful imitations of themselves, and for these they will ridicule you at the first moment of a national coldness, or at the first show of a national estrangement. They laugh at you; and if they ceased to laugh at you, they would lose one great stronghold of their comic drama, and be reduced to the *mari infortuné* as the sole absurdity of human nature.

They laugh at you because you emblematised so much that they like to ridicule, and you point the moral of what they glory to make absurd. They laugh at you, besides, because you are the very converse of all that is French, and in your cookery, your

dress, your social habits, and your politeness, you offer a standing protest against that Parisian standard which all the rest of Europe recognise as the pyramid of civilisation. I know newspaper writers will tell you that these are the coarse and vulgar prejudices of a past age, that they are no more akin to modern notions than Hogarth's picture of the Calais Gate. I have read wonderful leading articles on the cordial good understanding that subsists between the two countries, and I have gone down to a foreign club to hear more covert sneers at English credulity on the subject of these very articles than were at all either pleasant or assuring.

Let us not quarrel by all means, but let us not hug. I see scores of reasons for not going to war with France. I see double as many for not running into close embrace with her. It is not alone that you must mix intimately with Frenchmen to know their feeling towards England, but you must live on terms of easy relationship with the other nations of Europe, with whose people Frenchmen discuss Englishmen and their habits. You must hear what they say of England in Russia, in Austria, in Italy; how they criticise our institutions and question our pretensions to third parties—what they say of the scandals of our private life, given so publicly as they are in our newspapers—what they remark on the insufficiency

of our means to effect a mere tenth of what we presume to dictate—what they observe on the disparity between our wealth and our power—how they harp on the crimes so flauntingly ventilated by the press, and the hypocritical labours of a legislation on the subject of Sunday refreshment or Sunday recreation, so that infanticide may flourish while the tea-garden is put down.

Launch a Frenchman out on such themes as these, and then tell me what value you attach to all this *entente cordiale* of which we are so vainglorious. Remember that this Frenchman's civilisation is not your civilisation—his ideas of literature and art are the reverse of yours—his political hopes, fears, and ambitions are opposed to yours as is black to white. He aspires to changes and modifications and alliances you neither want nor wish for; and you must either consent to follow France into a policy which is not your policy, or to rupture this eternal friendship by some refusal which, like that of Lord Russell about the Congress, will lead to an estrangement only short of a separation. These hollow friendships, like rotten artillery, always explode at the most inconvenient moment; and so sure as we swear to such a bond with France, you will see an increased activity in our dockyards, and read of more trials at Shoe-buryness and more plate-hammering at Millwall.

But why have I heated my blood while the thermometer points to 93° in the shade with all this tirade about Frenchmen? Do I not know that John Bull likes to be deceived, and that there is no deception he so greedily devours as the notion that foreigners like him? I'm sure I hope they do! I can only say, if it be so, that the duplicity of the Continent exceeds all that I have ever believed of human nature.

No more of politics; now for peace, sea-breezes, orange-blossoms, and grape-clusters. And really there is in the hot basking noon of Italy, while the ear rings with the cicada, and the very atmosphere glitters, a something of intense enjoyment, as though it were a world made for pure delight, for all that can steep the senses in rich enjoyment, and draw over the mind a dreamy rapture, the seventh heaven of ecstatic fancy.

Who wants to do more than live in such a climate? Who needs books, newspapers, visitors, or occupations? Who asks for more than the tempered light of the half-darkened room, the faint odour of the lemon-groves, the liquid ripple of the tideless sea, or perhaps the faint tinkle of the guitar, from the awning-covered boat that steals noiselessly under the cliff?

I take no shame to myself that I cannot work

beneath such a sun, and I resign myself to a voluptuous indolence, as though obeying an ordinance of nature. I reflect, however, a great deal, but I do so always with my eyes closed, and a pillow under my head, and with such a semblance of perfect repose that calumnious people have said I was asleep.

These hours of reflection occupy a large share of the forenoon, and a considerable portion of the time between an early dinner and sunset. They are periods of great enjoyment; they once upon a time were even more so, when an opinion prevailed in my household that it would be little short of sacrilege to disturb me, such being the creative hours of my active intelligence. The faith, I grieve to say, has long since changed for a less reverent version of my labours, and people are less scrupulous about interruption.

Long habit, however, stands my part, and I can, however aroused, return to my broken reflections at any moment, and follow out their course as pleasantly—ay, and to the full as profitably—as before.

I lay in one of these intellectual swoons, after a long swim, with a faint sea-breeze stealing gently into the room through the closed jalousies. There was a nice odour of jasmine and verbena in the room, and a low murmuring ripple beneath the window, all of which served to soothe and calm me, making

what might have been the labour of thought a mere dream-ramble of the mind. I lay I know not how long in this state, when a stunning thud seemed to shake the air, and made the very room vibrate. I started up, and suddenly a deep boom of a gun swelled out, another and another followed, and on they rolled in measured time, till I counted seventeen. I flung wide my jalousies, and there, across the entrance of my little bay, there stood five mighty three-deckers, all canvass set, and standing proudly in, with their royals almost touching the clouds. From one which had just saluted the smoke hung lazily along the side. It was a grand and noble sight, not the less touching as a voice behind me cried out—"Here comes the English fleet!"

Now it is a very different thing to see a three-decker at Spithead, and to see her swinging round to her anchor in a foreign bay—to mark her tall spars rising above the surrounding shipping, and her glorious "Jack" floating out proudly to the breeze. It is not merely a splendid ship that you look at—it is not only her graceful lines, her taper spars, her majesty, and her strength, you admire—you feel it is something of England herself—a fragment of the great country is before you—that in that floating fortress England is represented; that English hearts and English blood animate that mass, giving it a

special character distinctive from all around it; that it is by such as these, covering every sea and resting in every roadstead, we are known as a people to the whole world; and that, by the voice of *their* thunders, we are able to demand reparation for wrong, and respect for our name throughout the globe. I own to you, even at the cost of that interruption to reflection of which I have spoken, I felt very proud to see these majestic ships—followed soon after by three others—anchor in my bay.

Three of the monsters were iron-clads, and in their lower masts, and, to my eyes, misshapen prows, very inferior in beauty to their wooden neighbours, one of which was perhaps the handsomest frigate in the world. They made, however, a glorious spectacle; and as I gazed at them I felt myself humming unconsciously 'Rule Britannia,' and recalling that marvellous picture of Stanfield's of Trafalgar at four in the afternoon.

Scarcely had they anchored than their launches were seen—black, brown, and white—with snowy awnings, sweeping with measured stroke towards shore. I hastened down to the little jetty eager to see the great brawny fellows, with their clear blue eyes and Saxon faces, so resolute-looking and so ready, and all so unlike the swarthy sailor of the south, with his treacherous black eye and his hand stealth-

ily seeking for his knife; and there they were, in gigs and fast cutters and launches and dingies, as coolly undergoing the stare of the multitude as if the prying faces that peered at them were as lifeless as they were dirty.

I suspect there must be something provocative to foreigners in that careless sort of independent air your English sailor assumes as he steps on a foreign shore—a something that seems to say, So long as you are quiet and civil, and only cheat me, I'll not do you any harm; but if you show your teeth, or bristle up, then Heaven help you. The lazy lounge of the blue-jacket, changed in a twinkling for the activity of the tiger, is so very distinctive amidst a prowling, skulking, grimy set of lazy rascals, hitching their ragged coats over their idle shoulders, and scowling unmistakable hatred at the clean-clad, well-fed tars.

It was a long time since I had seen a veritable midshipman, a creature of four feet three, with a nice soft blue eye, and a mouth of gentle meaning curved into a command shape, and made stern by singing out, "Bow there, fenders!"

There is something very picturesque in that blending of early boyhood with the officer. The little fellow who would be the companion of his younger sisters, sitting up tiller in hand, and shouting out, "Give way, men!" with a voice vibrating with power.

I speak only here of the small-craft middy, the aspiring urchin who wants to waltz with the largest partner in the room, and affects to take more rum in his grog than the lieutenant; for there are other midshipmen so very near to the wardroom in size, gait, and demeanour, that you only know they are not of it by some stripe the less on a sleeve or a cuff.

The small middy, however, is a great type. I have one in my eye that amused me and interested me much; we called him Cupid, from his incessant pursuit of the sex in ball-room and picnics: he was the rival of the most pretentious men in the room, and not always the unsuccessful one. He was a fine little fellow, who brought the hardihood of a "cutting-out" to a tour of the polka, and went at the Lancers as if he were boarding a Frenchman. The dash and daring had its effect, for pretty girls liked to dance with him; and in the triumphant air with which he would walk off with the *belle* of the room, you saw the germ of that audacity that would one day grace a gazette.

Bonne chance, Cupidon! I hope you have many as happy days and nights before you as I have lately seen you enjoying so heartily.

It is, to be sure, a very racy delight on land that the sailor feels. On shore he goes at its pleasures

with such a will! Nor is there anything more remarkable than his trustful sense that the landsman, knowing how little he sees of *terra firma*, will generously concede to him scores of immunities he would never yield to one of his own order: a great secret of sailor success is this heartfelt confidence in the good feeling towards him. Look at that young lieutenant yonder who has so interested his pretty partner. Is he talking love to her? Has he got her into the land of moonlight and Shelley? Is it softness and seductive nonsense he is whispering into her ear? Not a bit of it; he's telling her how heartbroken he is; that old Bracehard, who never comes ashore, and doesn't care for blue eyes or white shoulders, won't take his middle watch; or how that cruel commander Startem is going to stop his leave for the rest of the cruise, for heaven knows what inscrutable omission in things naval.

"You think our gunnery lieutenant, Fuze, such a nice fellow, so soft-spoken and so gentle—I wish you saw him on board, that's all!" Oh, what stores of wardroom sorrows does he pour into her ears—the capricious favouritism of the captain, the protective kindness of the first lieutenant for some midshipman with a pretty sister. It is doubtless a strange way to make love, but there are so many portals to the female heart, who knows which is the direct

one? Othello himself won his bride by tales of professional success, and it is just possible that a Queen's Counsel would prefer his suit by a *Fi Fa*, or a *Nisi Prius*.

At all events these sailors have their success; women like them for their indiscretions, they are so certain to compromise themselves; they open a courtship with the Lancers, and are sure to propose with the polka; and though nothing can be less serious in consequences than these advances, I believe women like them. "I sent him off, of course," can be said so triumphantly, with such a blended pride and pity, too, as to be positively becoming. The energy of the sailor to squeeze the last drop out of his land enjoyments is remarkable, an extra half-day ashore being well worth a month's cruelties and restrictions when he goes to sea again.

Very little does it trouble that fair ringletted coquette as she says, "You are not going yet; remember I promised you the galop," that her *Circe* syllables are to cost the poor fellow nights of rain on the deck and scorching days of boat-duty—that to swell the train of her rejected suitors in the cotillon, the victim will have hours in his little cell of a cabin with a marine at the door.

After all, however unphilosophic it may seem,

this same living for the hour is not a bad training for a life that must ever be made up of emergencies. The sea-life is all spasmodic. The whistle that sends men aloft to reef topsails, the drum that beats to quarters, the hoarse summons to take in sail, are such abrupt calls on human activity, that to reply promptly to them a man's nature must be strung up to a condition of everlasting readiness; and it is in alternate apathy and energy the sailor lives. No man, like him, arouses himself from sleep without a trace of slumber about him; no man, like him, meets an emergency so calmly, and knows so soon when the peril has passed off; and these conflicts with himself—for they are conflicts—impart to his manner a blended indolence and activity, dashed throughout with self-confidence, which is totally unlike anything we see on land.

I am not surprised to find few Irishmen in the navy. The severity of discipline must ever appear to the Celt the very acme of despotic cruelty. To carry out, besides, through one's whole life, the regulated deference to one's superior, and to feel that your captain in society is as much your master as your captain on the quarterdeck, is a hard trial—to feel you are never to get rid of the Navy List, but, Sinbad-like, go about the world with a First Lord on your back—ah me! these be sore

inflictions; and when I saw Cupid, even Cupid, timorous about engaging the partner that the first lieutenant had cast his eyes on, I own I felt happy that fate had given me mother earth for the scene of my labours, and only left the sea for so much of life as might be comprised in a sail or a swim, my lunch with the captain, or my glass of sherry in the wardroom.

If I do not desire to be a sailor, I like sailors greatly—I like their loyalty—I like their love of country—I like their honest belief in the superiority of England over France, Russia, Germany, and everywhere else. I like their especial pride in their own ship, be she wood or iron, and their heartfelt conviction that she can steam, sail, and steer better than anything afloat. I recognise in all these the compensations for scores of real hardships—for the hurricanes that split topsails and carry away studdingsail-booms—for snow-storms in the Baltic and white squalls in the Mediterranean—for, in one word, more of actual peril, and more of the active qualities that are called forth to meet peril, than a landsman knows in the whole length and breadth of his existence; since there is not a middy sent on shore of a dirty morning in November to fetch the post or despatch a telegram that does not stand face to face with more downright

danger—danger demanding a steady hand, a ready eye, a bold heart, and a firm will to confront—than your “lay lord,” or your “under-secretary,” in his carpeted room at Whitehall, ever experiences during the whole dull coil of his red-tape existence. If last, not least, I like the sailor’s hospitality—so frank, so genial, so hearty as it is. Like him as much as you will on shore, he is fifty times a better fellow when you see him on board; and, strange as it may seem to you, innumerable nothings that occurred in his land experiences—little trifling civilities, too small to be called attentions—will all be treasured up by him and recalled as things to be grateful for, and this great bronzed dark-whiskered fellow, with a voice like a brass trumpet, will show a nature soft, I was going to say, as a girl’s—heaven help me to a better simile, for no girl above ten years of age ever had one-half his real tenderness.

A sailor’s politics are very amusing. Not forming his opinions day by day, and imbibing his impressions on events by the channels of social intercourse, he has to read himself up by three months of the ‘Times,’ and come to his judgment on events through a most laborious effort of memory. That occasional confusions occur, that now and then slight mystifications embarrass him, is neither won-

derful nor unreasonable; not to say that his great personal interest in all administrations points to that most inscrutable thing, the Admiralty, of whose cruelty he can talk with eloquence, and of whose gross ignorance he discourses with a hearty enthusiasm.

When a great legal authority—a Chief-Justice, I believe—once at a Bar dinner responded to the toast of “the Navy” on the plea that he had begun life as a midshipman, Lord Brougham, who had not heard of his colleague’s antecedents, attributed his zeal to a mistake, and said he must have thought he was returning thanks for the “Bar,” and that navy was spelt with a “K.”

I want to part pleasantly from all those generous fellows with whom I have lived of late so happily. I drink to them all health and prosperity, be they iron or wood. They can have no successes, no advancements, no bigger swabs on their shoulders, nor broader lace on their caps, than I wish and hope for them.

P. S.—I have found that my sea-friends are dissatisfied with me for a judgment I once passed on naval whist. They arraign me for its fairness. I now apologise publicly, and own I was wrong.

I have lately played largely with blue-jackets, and am free to declare that I met several who

remembered what was the trump, and only two who revoked, and *they* belonged to the same ship. Delicacy forbids me to say her name, but it is gratifying to think she will soon be paid off, and out of commission.

THE COMING MEN.

I AM naturally disposed to be hopeful. I have inherited—it was nearly all that came to me in that guise—a sanguine temperament; and it is very rarely that I fail to detect in the inkiest and blackest of skies a patch of blue, even though it be only sufficient to make a coatee for a Prussian policeman.

Simply as a matter of social economy, it is not a bad line to take. The world is stocked with its prophets of evil; there is a positive glut of gloomy fellows. Take any society of twenty people—of course I mean Britons—and you will unquestionably find fifteen, if not more, on the side of our great inferiority to the French, the decline of our literature, the decay of our coal-fields, the decrease of our influence, and a score mote of suchlike enlivening reflections.

There is a vast number of people who have not

the vestige of dramatic ability, but who can "get up" the part of Macaulay's New Zealander, sit on London Bridge, and speculate as they view the ruins of St Paul's. The groaners fill the market, and the real opening is for the fellow who sees or fancies he sees that England is not going either to be knouted by the Scythian or whipped by the Yankee—that our ships are not coated with puddled iron, but with a cuirass that will send off French shot like hail upon ice—that we drive a very lively trade in pen-knives and cotton-prints—and on the whole, if we do not insist on keeping too large fires, and will occasionally burn a little slack, our great-grand-children may still have enough coal left to warm their tea-kettles.

Let me caution you, however, if you be disposed to adopt this as a career, not to run riot in the seemingly inexhaustible riches of your store. Have—or appear to have—a reason for your hopefulness. It need not be a good reason, nor even a plausible one. Heaven be thanked for it, the world is not very logical; so that when, with a confident look and tone, a man says "Therefore," he has sent conviction in front of him, like a courier to order fresh horses. "*Voilà la raison que votre fille est muette,*" says Sganarelle, the great master of logic and rhetoric too. And are we not stocked with Sganarelles

in our public life? Look at the Church, the Bar, Medicine—not to speak of Parliament, where they “congregate.”

Every Englishman imagines he can argue, just as he believes he can drive a gig; and for this reason he is flattered by being addressed as an argumentative creature. He likes the ‘Times’ mainly because that journal always appears to appeal to his sound good sense, never belabours him with traditionary balderdash, or bedazzles him with showy subtleties, but bluntly says, “John, is this the sort of thing will suit *you*? You are neither Frenchman nor Russian: do you imagine that *you*, nourished by beef, invigorated by beer, and elevated by the income-tax, will stand this, that, and t’other?”

’Tis a very humdrum sort of song this; but so is the national melody of “Bobbing John;” and yet that graceful air preserves its place in the popular heart, emblematising at once the attractions of domestic life and our execrable taste in music. Again, then, do I repeat, be hopeful. Very few things are as bad as they seem; and even a bottle of Gladstone at fourteen shillings the dozen is not always fatal.

You will probably tell me it is a strange time to preach hopefulness with cholera in the air, Fenianism and the cattle-rot in the kingdom, not to speak of

the French alliance, which I regard as the worst danger of the four, and yet am I still hopeful.

There is not on record, perhaps, a more touching picture of the peculiar character of the hopefulness I would inculcate than that story of the German prince who told his ragged retinue to be of good cheer, for he had just sown flax, and they should all have shirts.

Such is the spirit of my sanguine humour. If I have not sown flax, I have gone over the list of the new members elected for Parliament, and I have risen from the investigation with a glow of hopefulness I have not felt for years. Nor was this a merely emotional sentiment, too subtle for reason, or too impulsive for reliance. No; it was a well-matured and well-considered trustfulness, based on fact. I have gone carefully over them—I will not say how often—and on each fresh occasion have I said to myself, Courage, Cornelius, there is hope for us yet. With a very few exceptions—not half-a-dozen at most—there is not a man amongst them one has ever heard of before. Heaven be praised, thought I, here are no celebrities, no men of genius, no distinguished lights of science, literature, or the arts, and, blessed be the augury, not a senior wrangler in the whole of them! The grand issue will at length come on for trial. Here have we the converse of

all that we have of late run wild upon—the system of examination for office. Here are these men; competitors, no doubt, they were, but in what? Not in Colenso's Arithmetic, Grotius, and Ollendorf, but in all the clever arts and sly rogueries of an election contest—in all the moods that make men amenable to bribery, and insinuate principles by the aid of five-pound notes. Here are fellows trained to the dialectics of the committee-room, not very great proficient, probably, in history, logic, or international law, but with an instinctive appreciation of the corruptibility of that immaculate creature the British voter, and with a wide and varied knowledge of what may be called the working forces of our great constitution.

When a convict-ship used to arrive at Melbourne in the old days, bankers were ever on the look-out for the runaway cashiers, the forgers, the defaulting stockbrokers, and fraudulent attorneys. They knew well that out of such as these confidential clerks are made. Now so am I full of confidence that in these crafty men, coming into the House neither for the display of great eloquence, a wide acquaintance with foreign questions, nor minds stored with home information, we shall find great stuff for railroad committees, wonderful materials for investigating the law of bankruptcy, tenant-right, and questions of

"drainage." If there will be some of those men so much reprobated by Lord Stanley, fluent of speech and copious in words, I feel certain that the majority, and a large majority too, will be as stammering in utterance and as bungling in expression as the noble Lord could desire, and will afford, in the incoherency of their statements and the general confusion of their ideas, all those guarantees for good sound sense on which his Lordship lays such deserved stress.

These *novi homines* come into public life rather triumphantly, it must be confessed. To make way for some of them we have displaced some tried and able statesmen, some admirable business men, and some brilliant speakers. Would it be too invidious to ask how many of them are worth Seymour Fitzgerald? What number of them collectively could sum up his knowledge of Continental questions, and his rare acquaintance with the men as well as the measures of foreign cabinets?

Can any one promise us, from the mass of the incoming, as witty and as ready a talker as Bernal Osborne, whose politics, however I disapprove, cannot arrest my gratitude to him for the relief he has so often afforded to the dulness of debate, and for the flashes he has thrown through the Cimmerian darkness of a speech and a motion by Sir Charles Wood?

I will not proceed further. I might go to Ireland, it is true, but, as Mrs Malaprop says, "comparisons are odorous;" and, after all, one lawyer is so very like another that it is not of much moment by which the borough is illustrated.

Now, when a grave, thoughtful, economical people like the English calmly throw out tried and efficient men, and take into their places certain new and unknown ones, there must be a reason for it. Perhaps they think statesmen, like old hunters, ought to have now and then their "run"—their year or so in the straw-yard of idleness. Possibly they deem the soil of the mind will not stand continual cropping, but should have its fallow time to recruit and reinvigate. Perhaps they may have been bitten by the popular mania for acclimatisation, and endeavouring to accustom new species to the troubled waters of political life; and if so, some Frank Buckland of politics will give us daily bulletins of these new molluscs of statecraft, telling us what they feed on, and how they propagate, for surely our orators are as interesting to us as our oysters. One of the most invigorating things I know in the House is, that entering it is very like learning to skate. The whole seems simple and easy enough; and it is only after a man has got his one or two stunning croppers that he calms down into caution, and interferes with nobody any more. That these

young gentlemen who are now preparing for the ice have such calamities before them is not improbable. Nevertheless, I say to them, "Be of good cheer. Cornelius O'Dowd will be as a humane society to you; in the day of your disaster he will fish you out of the frozen water, and bring you back to the dreary thing you were when you fell in."

For my own part, I am glad of whatever promises novelty, just as I would feel grateful to the English playwright who would give us a drama we had not already witnessed in Paris. There may not be Disraelis, and Gladstones, and Bulwer Lyttons, and Brights, amongst the new men, but there might be a Horsman or two, and there will be scores of Roebucks, and not impossibly some Darby Griffiths.

One fish often pays for the whole draught; and so let us wait and see what the net will bring in. I repeat that I am hopeful just in proportion to the smallness of the promise. Had there been a rush of "double firsts" to the hustings, I'd have withdrawn my subscription to the 'Times,' and read nothing parliamentary for a twelvemonth.

I own frankly that my hopefulness is like Mark Tapley's—it comes out strong under difficulties; for I have read some of the election addresses of these men, and they were as dreary as those of old and tried politicians. Like the Vicar of Wakefield's

visitors, they were glad, and they were sorry; on the whole, however, they rejoiced by two millions and a quarter, such being the surplus revenue of the year.

Last of all, I am hopeful because the lamps that have hitherto guided us will still be with us; and whether the new men will flare into brightness, flicker, or be snuffed out, we shall still have enough of light to see our way, and grope for a new Premier.

HOW OUR VILLAGE BECAME A CAPITAL AND NEVER KNEW IT.

I LIVE in a "small neighbourhood," that is to say, I live in a circle so very limited that each of us knows perfectly every circumstance of the other—his means, his tastes, his joys, troubles, and creditors. Were I, for instance, to try to palm off on this intelligent public any pleasing fiction about my having come to this remote spot to devote myself to that great historical work I am composing on Scandinavia, and of which I have already sold the French translation for twenty thousand pounds; or were I to attempt to ventilate the notion that Mrs O'Dowd and I are miserable at the forced separation we live in; that I am in daily pursuit of a beautiful house with beautiful grounds, a beautiful view, and beautiful gardens for her—devoted as she is to "the beautiful" in all things;—there is nothing of either sex, over twelve

years of age, would not laugh me to scorn. I repeat, that we all live with such accurate information about each other, that disguise or concealment would be the most miserable of all failures; and this same openness is more effectual in the suppression of many little affectations and snobberies than a *régime* of the most perfect good taste and good manners. We have public opinion in its most condensed form, like those patent essences, a spoonful of which is equal to a pint of the ordinary decoction; and I defy the most refractory spirit amongst us to brave its judgments or make light of its decrees.

I could no more dare to give sixpence more for the turbot in the market than my neighbour has offered, than I could make love to the wife of his bosom; for I know that the fishmonger must come down to *his* price, and it would be perfidy in me to enhance it.

In the same way I could no more pretend to suggest that our whist-points should be twenty centimes instead of ten, than I could assume to augment the income-tax. The man who would venture on such innovations would be hooted!

If there be some tyranny in this, as perhaps there is, it is not also without its advantage. It is a death-blow to all pretension, and to that worst form of pretension which consists in rivalry. We have none of this.

The dietary of a workhouse is not more uniform than the entertainments we give each other. My leg of mutton is not a shade fatter, nor an ounce heavier, than my friend Simmons's next door; and I'll take good care that *his* chickens are not plumper than *mine*.

If I appear in a new coat a little earlier than my neighbours have come out in their fresh apparel, I am strictly careful to explain the circumstance, or attribute it to some disaster to my old one.

I have known public feeling even extend to the number of letters despatched or received by one amongst us, necessitating the precaution of having a portion of the correspondence addressed to a neighbouring village.

If I chafed a little at first at all this, I have learned to like it at last. In exchange for the pressure that I submit to, what a widespread freedom have I! If I be somewhat limited in my dealings with my own affairs, what a grand liberty do I enjoy with those of my neighbour! I should like to see how he would dare to give his daughter in marriage, to buy a new chimney-pot, or set up a wheelbarrow, without my cognisance and my approval.

With occasional little creaks and jars, our bearings, as the steam-engineers say, do get heated now and then; but I repeat, with slight occasional frictions,

the system works well—we have fraternity and equality, and perhaps as much liberty as is good for us. None of us ever travel, or if by any chance we do, we are especially minded to leave our foreign impressions with our contraband cigars at the frontier, and to re-enter our Happy Valley as simple-hearted, as bigoted, and as uninstructed as we quitted it.

If, however, we acquire little, we unlearn nothing, and time finds us only changed in aspect or activity—the soul is the same.

Strangers seldom come amongst us, and if they do, they soon take their leave. It is possible they find us dull—all exclusive societies are open to this reproach, and the Faubourg in Paris has long been deemed dreary by the “outsiders.” Perhaps, too, we require for our due appreciation a closer view, a calmer inspection, a more careful examination than mere passers-through could afford us. There are certain pictures before which the connoisseur might be satisfied to sit long and patiently, waiting mayhap for the happy gleam of light here, or the half tint there, not impossibly aiding by a wet sponge the secret wealth of rich colouring to develop itself, and show what depth and power can come out of seeming blackness.

So say I of us. It is the eye of observant knowledge can alone see how beautifully “composed” we

are—how much of “effect” we possess—how correctly drawn, how delicately coloured, how picturesquely grouped.

I remember the time when I used to regret that the world knew so little of us. I thought—Heaven forgive me for it—that it would throw an interest over our daily lives, if we felt that we pointed a moral or adorned a tale. I fancied that a graceful pen, something like his who sketched the Brunnens of Nassau, could find in us a most congenial theme. With our glorious landscape, our sweet climate, our rich vegetation, and our little old-world ways of courtesy, kindness, and curiosity, our lively impulse to puff ourselves and pry into our neighbours—a really fair and intelligent mind, I believed, would see no littleness in the character of our tastes and pursuits. Things are only little or big relatively. Not to say that it is not in a lone sequestered nook, with mountains behind and the sea before, that a man would come to inquire what was the last move of Bismarck—would France show her teeth about M. Ott, or would she seek, in a concession, a new alliance?—would the Pope accept the situation, cross his arms on his breast, and play martyr, when the French retired? or would he enlist another Irish contingent, and flourish a shillelagh in the face of Victor Emmanuel? or would the Irish priests, mak-

ing capital of their condemnation of Fenianism, ask for the destruction of the Established Church as the price of their loyalty? I say, that to discuss these and their like, or to learn the last guesses that shrewd men made on them, few would repair to our neighbourhood. Our local interests are supreme to us. There is not one of us who would not rather find out how Mrs Rigges got that new bonnet with the fall of real lace—"Valenciennes, my dear"—than know how Prussia jockeyed Austria out of Holstein; and for myself, I'd give a crown to learn where Grub got his ranunculus roots, and I'd not give a centime to know whether Prince Amadeo will marry the Spanish Infanta, or where the Prince of Augustenburg Sonderburg is to go when the order comes to pass him on to his parish.

Being such as I have said, it may be imagined what an amount of excitement was created in our circle by the announcement that a Duchess—Arch or Grand, I'm not sure which, nor whether she were Russian or Austrian—had been advised by her physician to try the mildest air of Europe. State reasons prevented her choosing a capital, for great people have to be diplomatic as well as dyspeptic; and her Imperial Highness had to seek out a spot whence she could hear and not be heard—see, and not be seen—meanwhile enjoying fresh air and

healthful exercise,—two luxuries very seldom within the reach of Highnesses, imperial or royal.

Though there were only two villas in the neighbourhood which could accommodate her, we had at least two thousand disputes as to which she had taken; and I have, at the hour I write, a very angry correspondence with an ex-major of marines, in defence of my reasons for believing it was the Sindaco's house and not Count Nerli's her Highness had engaged, he having pledged his word that he was at the post-office when Baron Katchachinkoff observed to Count Scratchedredagen—I forget what. I only know that the Duchess has taken both villas, and we have had all our bitterness for nothing. The next speculation that engaged us was, what line of conduct was to be adopted with regard to her Highness? Were we to call and leave our names? were we to ask to be presented, or were we to "wait to be asked"? I have a cut with my oldest friend in the colony on this, and I don't think we shall ever speak to each other again. The discussion was precisely one that excites the most lively animosities and stirs up feelings the most acutely irritating, since it involves not alone your good taste and sense of propriety, but your breeding, your manners, your habits of life, the people with whom you have lived, and the society which you frequented. Here, again,

a little patience might have stood us in stead, for her Highness's doctor informed us yesterday that she would know none of us—she came for quiet. It was because there was no "society" (*sic*), that she had selected the spot. The ambassador had given her the assurance that there was not one person in the whole vicinity could have any pretension to obtrude upon her. Hence had she come; "but," added the medico, "she is very benevolent, and you will find she will not leave the place without giving you reason to remember her generosity."

This closed the subject, and the most courageous amongst us has never reopened it.

For a while we tried to console ourselves by a little scandal. We endeavoured to show each other why her Imperial Highness could not cultivate us—that there were dreadful stories of her, about. Shocking things had happened at Carlsbad, or Ems, or Ischyl. I heard Rigges declare that he would take Mrs R.'s arm, and lead her out of the room, if the Duchess were to enter it! This moral turn was a beneficial alterative after our late repulse, and we pursued it for at least three weeks; and, like the gentleman in 'Tristram Shandy,' who passed days in speculating on what he should do if he were to meet a white bear, we spent hours in imagining what line of conduct we should adopt if any unfor-

fortunate accident should bring us face to face with her Highness. The steady stare—the defiant look—the glance at once condemnatory and haughty we were to bestow on her, became so popularly practised amongst us that we met each other on the parade with a frown, and only relaxed our sternness as we discovered our mistake.

I am certain she must have felt painfully all our severity. Rank and station are very fine things, but they cannot obliterate flesh and blood; and I assure you, I often pitied that woman as I saw her strolling along the sea-shore, drawing lines with her parasol in the sand, or sitting gazing on a fern—trying—trying to interest herself in objects that could not possibly supply a thought.

Our speculations were destined to have occupation nearer home! It was on a Wednesday—I am not likely to forget the day—it was our fish day, since on Monday the fishermen are sleeping off Sunday's drunkenness, and Tuesday is their first day at sea, hence Wednesday is the first market. I went out early that morning, and met Major Hogg coming back, his face angry-looking and flushed. "You needn't go to the Piazza, O'Dowd," cried he, "if you can't eat a skate or a dog-fish; that 'woman' has bought up the whole market."

"It was a small take, perhaps," remarked I.

"It was no such thing, sir. There were six splendid turbot, two creels of lobsters, and a basket of the best soles I have seen this year."

"What can she want with all these?—is she forbidden butcher-meat?"

"You'll find she is not, sir. She has left nothing there but a shin of beef and a kid. I wish any man good digestion that tries either of them; and as for vegetables, what do you think they asked me for six artichokes—small artichokes—not one of them the size of my closed fist?—a franc, sir, a franc! I give you my word of honour. I'll bring you to the place. I'll show you the old hag. If I don't live to make an example of her, don't call me Hogg!"

"But we shall have a famine if this goes on," cried I.

"It is a famine, sir. It is a famine at this very hour. It matters little to me whether the commodity fail altogether, or cost a price that makes it unattainable by me. If that woman likes to give four francs a-dozen for fresh eggs, when, I ask, are you or I likely to eat one?"

"And where are all these fine maxims we read of, about Supply being always commensurate with Demand?"

"In the lying volumes they were written in, sir. Supply takes care never to overstock the market.

When prices rise they never decline again. To ape that woman yonder, even in the cost of her marketing, there are always snobs ready and willing. There are people will tell you proudly how their cook outbid her Highness's, and carried off the asparagus, and relate with a flush of triumph that the spring chickens before you were only saved from imperial voracity by a stratagem."

From that day and that hour date our calamities. "The woman"—I revel in the word—it is the only vengeance left us—has regularly eaten us up. What her household consists of—how many tigers and boa-constrictors in human shape she may keep—I have no idea. How their appetites suffer no abatement, no decrease—how they never fall ill, I cannot conceive; neither do I know how they devour whole beds of asparagus and bushels of strawberries. As to butter, I believe they must anoint themselves with it!

Nor is it merely in matters of food they have exhausted us, but they have hired every carriage in the place; everything with four wheels or with two has been taken—every horse and every ass. So too, seaward, all is in their hands, and there is not a boat nor a boatman to be had. I know of nothing like this. I never heard anything to compare with it, except a pestilence or a visitation of locusts.

A few of us are vegetarians, and have taken to roots. A neighbour of mine is getting a second wheel to his wheelbarrow, and means to take his airings with the aid of his gardener; and I myself am contemplating a plank and a pair of paddles to serve me in lieu of a yacht; but all these devices will not save us from the graver danger that impends over us.

The Minister of Finance having heard, it is said, of our sudden prosperity,—how house-rent has quadrupled, and butcher-meat risen to fabulous prices; how eggs are selling at the price of pearls, and chickens bring what peacocks once sold for,—the Minister, I say, has been pleased to recommend our being enrolled in the category of cities, and being promoted to the rank of municipal taxation.

Was there ever a swindle like it? On the faith of its cheapness I settled here. I contracted with myself to submit to scores of things I had no mind for, simply because my pound here rose to thirty shillings. I put up with ill-paved and ill-lighted streets, second-hand furniture, and third-rate society. I braved dirt, dulness, and obscurity. I booked myself to encounter shocks to every principle and every prejudice that I possess, all for economy. And now *this* has been withdrawn from me, and I am left without even a fraction of compensation for all my sacrifices!

To be sure, I am told I live in a Capital ; but *cui bono* the Capital whose only development is dearness ? *Cui bono* the Capital which has not a resource beyond a village ? *Cui bono* a Capital where one Grand or Arch-duchess can eat up the market, drink all the milk, and ride all the horses ?

Sir John Bowring's white elephant is nothing to her ; for I observe, in the same town with that austere monster there was food enough for five other megathens, who, being only grey, received coarser rations, though still very abundant ones ; but in our village the one "white elephant" has made a clean sweep of everything. Nor is the least aggravating feature of the whole thing, that the population who are letting their houses at the rates of Paris, and selling their chickens at the prices of Covent Garden—making fortunes on every hand, by every species of extortion and iniquity—that these people, I say, run about saying that they are ruined, that the minister is going to add a decime to the tax on balloons, or that before long no private gentleman will be able to keep his own diving-bell ! You don't know anything of how we are ground down by our heavy imposts. O generation of bad arithmeticians ! how will a nine per cent tax measure with a three hundred per cent house-rent ? I now and then feel rather downhearted about all this ; but I pluck

up my courage as I think, after all, the evil may cure itself. Perhaps the Archduchess might take ill; perhaps she might take her departure. Perhaps the French Emperor, hearing of our prosperity (!)—it can scarcely be kept long a secret—may feel vexed, and order us once more to become a village. I can only say, if he should, I will recant all I have ever said of him, and be as good an Imperialist as if I had the robbery of the share-market or the concession of the last new line of railroad projected by M. Mirès.

As a village we were picturesque and we were prosperous; our small ways suited our small fortunes; and our ambitions were so moderate, and our aspirations so discreet, we were seldom ridiculous. All that is now changed. We have become a capital without wealth, and a metropolis without movement. Like the people of Siam, we have "taken it out in grandeur," and must be satisfied with quarter-rations ourselves, that we may feed our "white elephant."

HERO-WORSHIP AND ITS DANGERS:

A STORY.

JEAN PAUL tells us that there never was a nature yet formed without its vein of romance—that the most realistic and commonplace people we have ever met have their moods of romance, and that the cord, however little we may suspect it, runs through the woof of all humanity.

I am not able to affirm that he is right; but certainly a little incident which has just occurred to me leads me to believe that there are cases of the affection in natures and temperaments in which nothing would have led me to suspect them. I need not be told that it is the men who have a most worldly character who are often seen marrying portionless wives; that traits of self-sacrifice and devotion are being continually displayed by cold, ungenial, and, to all seeming, unimpressible people. What I

was not prepared for was to find that hero-worship could find a place in the heart of a hard, money-getting, money-lending fellow, whose ordinary estimate of humanity was based less on what they were than what they had. I own that I had no other clue to the man's nature than that furnished by a few lines of a newspaper advertisement, which set forth his readiness to advance sums from one hundred to five hundred pounds on mere personal security, and at a most moderate rate of interest. And though the former amounted to obligations the breach of which would have reduced one to bondage, and the latter varied from eighty to a hundred and thirty per cent, he was so pleasant-looking—so chatty—so genially alive to the difficulties that beset youth—so forgivingly merciful to wasteful habits and ways, that I took to him from the moment I saw him, and signed my four bills for fifty each, and took up my hundred and eighteen pounds off the table with the feeling that at last I had found in an utter stranger that generous trustfulness and liberality I had in vain looked for amongst kindred and relatives.

We had a pint of madeira to seal the bargain. He told me in a whisper it was a priceless vintage. I believe him. On a rough calculation, I think every glass I took of it cost me forty-seven pounds some odd shillings. It is not, however, to speak of this

event that I desire here. Mr Nathan Joel and I ceased after a while to be the dear friends we swore to be over that madeira. The history of those four bills, too complicated to relate, became disagreeable. There were difficulties—there were renewals—there were protests—and there was a writ. Nathan Joel was—no matter what. I got out of his hands after three years by ceding a reversion worth five times my debt, with several white hairs in my whiskers, and a clearer view of gentlemen of the Jewish persuasion than I had ever picked up out of Ecclesiasticus.

A good many years rolled over—years in which I now and then saw mention of Mr Joel as a plaintiff or an opposing creditor—once or twice as assignee, too. He was evidently thriving. Men were living very fast, smashes were frequent, and one can imagine the coast of Cornwall rather a lucrative spot after a stormy equinox. I came abroad, however, and lost sight of him ; a chance mention, perhaps, in a friend's letter, how he had fallen into Joel's hands—that Joel advanced or refused to advance the money—something about cash, was all that I knew of him, till t'other evening the landlord of the little inn near my villa called up to ask if I knew anything of a certain Mr Nathan Joel, who was then at his inn without baggage, money, papers, or effects of any

kind, but who on hearing my name cried out with ecstasy, "Ah, he knows me. You've only to ask Mr O'Dowd who I am, and he'll satisfy you at once."

"So," thought I, "Joel! the Lord hath delivered thee into my hands, and now what sort of vengeance shall I take? Shall I ignore you utterly, and declare that your claim to my acquaintance is a gross and impudent fraud? Shall I tell the innkeeper I disown you?" If this was my first thought, it soon gave way—it was so long since the rascal had injured me, and I had cursed him very often for it since then. It was his nature too; *that* also ought to be borne in mind. When leeches cease sucking they die, and very probably money-lenders wither and dry up when they are not abstracting our precious metals.

"I'll go over and see if it be the man I know," said I, and set off at once towards the inn. As I went along, the innkeeper told me how the stranger had arrived three nights back, faint, weary, and exhausted, saying that the guide refused to accompany him after he entered the valley, and merely pointed out the road and left him. "This much I got out of him," said the landlord, "but he is not inclined to say more, but sits there wringing his hands and moaning most piteously."

Joel was at the window as I came up, but seeing me he came to the door. "Oh, Mr O'Dowd," cried he, "befriend me this once, sir. Don't bear malice, nor put your foot on the fallen, sir. Do pity me, sir, I beseech you."

The wretched look of the poor devil pleaded for him far better than his words. He was literally in rags, and such rags, too, as seemed to have once been worn by another, for he had a brown peasant jacket and a pair of goatskin breeches, and a pair of shoes fastened round his ankles with leather thongs.

"So," said I, "you have got tired of small robberies and taken to the wholesale line. When did you become a highwayman?"

"Ah, sir!" cried he, "don't be jocose, don't be droll. This is too pitiful a case for laughter."

I composed my features into a semblance of decent gravity, and after a little while induced him to relate his story, which ran thus:

Mr Joel, it appeared, who for some thirty years of life had taken a very practical view of humanity, estimating individuals pretty much like scrip, and ascribing to them what value they might bring in the market, had suddenly been seized with a most uncommon fervour for Victor Emmanuel, the first impulse being given by a "good thing he had done

in Piedmontese fives," and a rather profitable investment he had once made in the Cavour Canal. In humble gratitude for these successes, he had bought a print of the burly monarch, whose bullet head and bristling mustaches stared fiercely at him from over his fireplace, till by mere force of daily recurrence he grew to feel for the stern soldier a sentiment of terror dashed with an intense admiration.

"Talk of Napoleon, sir!" he would say, "he's a humbug—an imposition—a wily, tricky, intriguing dodger. If you want a great man—a man that never knew fear—a man that is above all flimsy affectations—a man of the heroic stamp—there he is for you!

"As for Garibaldi, he's not to be compared to him. Garibaldi was an adventurer, and made adventure a career; but here's a king! here's a man who has a throne, who was born in a palace, descended from a long line of royal ancestors, and instead of giving himself up to a life of inglorious ease and self-indulgence, he mounts his horse and heads a regiment, sir. He takes to the field like the humblest soldier in his ranks, goes out, thrashes the Austrians, drives them out of Milan, hunts them over the plains of Lombardy, and in seven days raises the five per cents from fifty-one and a half to eighty-two and a quarter 'for the account.' Show me the equal of that in

history, sir. There's not another man in Europe could have done as much for the market."

His enthusiasm knew no bounds; he carried a gold piece of twenty francs, with the King's image, to his watch-chain, and wore small coins, with the cross of Savoy, in his breast, as shirt-studs. An ardour intense as this is certain to bear its effects. Mr Joel had often promised himself a trip to the Continent, of which he knew nothing beyond Paris. He took, then, the season of autumn, when the House was up, and money-lending comparatively dull, and came abroad. He told his friends he was going to Vichy; he affected a little gout. It was a disease gentlemen occasionally permitted themselves, and Mr Joel was a rising man, and liked to follow the lead of persons of condition. Very different, however, was his object; his real aim was to see the great man whose whole life and actions had taken such an intense hold on his imagination. To see him, to gaze on him, to possess himself fully of the actual living traits of the heroic Sovereign; and if by any accident, by any happy chance, by any of those turns of capricious fortune which now and then elevate men into a passing greatness, to get speech of him!—this Mr Joel felt would be an operation more overwhelmingly entrancing than if Spanish bonds were to be paid off in full, or Poyais fives to be quoted at par in the market.

It is not impossible that Mr Joel believed his admiration for the *Re Galantuomo* gave him a *bona fide* and positive claim on that monarch's regard. This is a delusion by no means rare: it possesses a large number of people, and influences them in their conduct to much humbler objects of worship than a king on his throne. Sculptors, authors, and painters know something of what I mean, and not uncommonly come to hear how ungraciously they are supposed to have responded to an admiration of which it is possible they never knew, and which it would be very excusable in them if they never valued. The worshipper, in fact, fancies that the incense he sends up as smoke should come back to him in some shape substantial. However this may be, and I am not going to press it further on my reader's attention, Mr Joel got to imagine that Victor Emmanuel would have felt as racy an enjoyment at meeting with *him*, as he himself anticipated he might experience in meeting the King. It goes a very long way in our admiration of any one to believe that the individual so admired has a due and just appreciation of ourselves. We start at least with one great predisposing cause of love—an intense belief in the good sense and good taste of the object of our affections.

Fully persuaded, then, that the meeting would be an event of great enjoyment to each, the chief diffi-

culty was to find a "mutual friend," as the slang has it, to bring them into the desired relations.

This was really difficult. Had King Victor Emmanuel been an industrial monarch, given to cereals, or pottery, gutta-percha, cotton, or corrugated iron, something might have been struck out to present him with as pretext for an audience. Was he given to art, or devoted to some especial science?—a bust, a bronze, or a medal might have paved the way to an interview. The King, however, had no such leanings; and whatever his weaknesses, there were none within the sphere of the money-changer's attributions; and as Mr Joel could not pretend that he knew of a short cut to Venice, or a secret path that led to the Vatican, he had to abandon all hopes of approaching the monarch by the legitimate roads.

See him I must, speak to him I will, were, however, the vows he had registered in his own heart, and he crossed the Alps with this firm resolve, leaving, as other great men before him have done, time and the event to show the way where the goal had been so firmly fixed on.

At Turin he learned the King had just gone to Ancona to open a new line of railroad. He hastened after him, and arrived the day after the celebration to discover that his Majesty had left for Brindisi. He followed to Brindisi, and found the King had only

stopped there an hour, and then pursued his journey to Naples. Down to Naples went Mr Joel at once, but to his intense astonishment nobody there had heard a word of the King's arrival. They did not, indeed, allege the thing was impossible ; but they slyly insinuated that, if his Majesty had really come, and had not thought proper to make his arrival matter of notoriety, they as Italians, Neapolitans *surtout*, knew good manners better than to interfere with a retirement it was their duty to respect. This they said with a sort of half-droll significance that puzzled Mr Joel much, for he had lived little in Italy, and knew far more about Cremorne than the Casino !

Little dubious sentences, shallow insinuations, half-laughing obscurities, were not weapons to repel such a man as Joel. His mind was too steadfastly intent on its object to be deterred by such petty opposition. He had come to see the King, and see him he would. This same speech he made so frequently, so publicly, and so energetically, that at the various cafés which he frequented, no sooner was he seen to enter than some stranger to him—all were strangers—would usually come up in the most polite manner and express a courteous hope that he had been successful, and had either dined with his Majesty or passed the evening with him. It is need-

less to say that the general impression was that poor Mr Joel was a lunatic, but as his form of the malady seemed mild and inoffensive, his case was one entirely for compassion and pity.

A few, however, took a different view. They were of the police, and consequently they regarded the incident professionally. To their eyes, Joel was a Mazzinian, and come out specially to assassinate the King. It is such an obvious thing to the official mind that a man on such an errand would attract every notice to his intentions beforehand, that they not alone decided Joel to be an intended murderer, but they kept a strict record of all the people he accidentally addressed, all the waiters who served, and all the hackney cabmen who drove him, while the telegraphic wires of the whole kingdom vibrated with one name, asking, Who is Joel? trace Joel; send some one to identify Joel. Little poor Joel knew all this time that he had been photographed as he sat eating his oysters, and that scraps of his letters were pasted on a large piece of pasteboard in the Ministry of Police, that his handwriting might be shown under his varied attempts to disguise it.

One evening he sat much later than was his wont at a little open-air café of the St Lucia quarter. The sky was gloriously starlit, and the air had all the balmy softness of the delicious south. Joel would

have enjoyed it and the cool drink before him intensely, if it were not that his disappointed hopes threw a dark shadow over everything, and led him to think of all that his journey had cost him in cash, and all in the foregone opportunities of discounts and usuries.

A frequenter of the café, with whom he had occasionally exchanged greetings, sat at the same table; but they said little to each other, the stranger being evidently one not given to much converse, and rather disposed to the indulgence of his own thoughts in silence.

"Is it not strange," said Joel, after a long pause, "that I must go back without seeing him?"

A half impatient grunt was all the reply, for the stranger was well weary of Joel and his sorrows.

"One would suppose that he really wanted to keep out of my way, for up to this moment no one can tell me if he be here or not."

Another grunt.

"It is not that I have left anything undone, heaven knows. There isn't a quarter of the town I have not walked, day and night, and his is not a face to be mistaken; I'd know him at a glance."

"And what in the devil's name do you want with him when you have seen him?" exclaimed the other, angrily. "Do you imagine that a King of

Italy has nothing better to do with his time than grant audiences to every idle John Bull whose debts or doctors have sent him over the Alps?" This rude speech was so fiercely delivered, and with a look and tone so palpably provocative, that Joel at once perceived his friend intended to draw him into a quarrel, so he finished off his liquor, took up his hat and cane, and with a polite *felice sera, Signor*, was about to withdraw.

"Excuse me," said the stranger, rising, with a manner at once obsequious and apologetic. "I entreat you to forgive my rude and impatient speech. I was thinking of something else, and forgot myself. Sit down for one moment, and I will try and make you a proper reparation—a reparation you will be satisfied with.

"You want to see the King, and you desire to speak with him: both can be done with a little courage; and when I say this, I mean rather presence of mind—*aplomb*, as the French say—than anything like intrepidity or daring. Do you possess the quality I speak of?"

"It is my precise gift—the essential feature of my character," cried Joel, in ecstasy.

"This, then, is the way—and mind I tell you this secret on the faith that as an English gentleman you preserve it inviolate—'parole Inglese,' is a prov-

erb with us, and we have reason to believe that it deserves its signification."

Joel swore to observe the bond, and the other continued—

"The King, it is needless to tell you, detests state and ceremonial; he abhors courtly etiquette, and the life of a palace is to him the slavery of the galleys. His real pleasure is the society of a few intimates, whom he treats as equals, and with whom he discourses in the rough dialect of Piedmont, as it is talked in the camp by his soldiers. Even this amount of liberty is, however, sometimes not sufficient for this bold native spirit; he longs for more freedom—for, in fact, that utter absence of all deference, all recognition of his high estate, which followers never can forget; and to arrive at this, he now and then steals out at night and gains the mountains, where, with a couple of dogs and a rifle, he will pass two, three, perhaps four days, sharing the peasant's fare and his couch, eating the coarsest food, and sleeping on straw, with a zest that shows what a veritable type of the medieval baron this Count of Savoy really is, and by what a mistake it is that he belongs to an age where the romance of such a character is an anachronism!

"You may feel well astonished that nobody could tell you where he is—whether here or at Turin, at

Bologna, at Florence, or Palermo. The fact is they don't know, that's the real truth—not one of them knows; all they are aware of is that he is off—away on one of those *escapades* on which it would be as much as life is worth to follow him; and there is La Marmora, and there sits Minghetti, and yonder Della Rovere, not daring to hint a syllable as to the King's absence, nor even to hazard a guess above a whisper as to when he will come back again. Now I can tell you where he is—a mere accident put me in possession of the secret. A *fattore* of my brother's came up yesterday from the Terra di Lavoro and told how a strange man, large, strong-boned, and none over bland-looking, had been quail-shooting over the Podere for the last two days; he said he was a wonderful shot, but cared nothing about his game, which he gave freely away to any one he met. I made him describe him accurately, and he told me how he wore a tall high-crowned hat—a 'calabrese,' as they call it—with a short peacock's feather, a brown jacket all covered with little buttons, leather small-clothes ending above the knees, which were naked, light gaiters half way up the leg, his gun slung at his back, pistols in his belt, and a *couteau de chasse* without a scabbard hung by a string to his waistbelt; he added that he

spoke little, and that little in a strange dialect, probably Roman, or from the Marches.

“By a few other traits he established the identity of one whose real rank and condition he never had the slightest suspicion of. Now, as the King is still there, and as he told the Paroco of the little village at Catanzaro that he’d send him some game for his Sunday dinner, which he meant to partake of with him, you have only to set out to-night, reach Nola, where with the aid of a pony and a carratella you will make your way to Raniglia, after which, three miles of a brisk mountain walk—nothing to an Englishman—you’ll arrive at Catanzaro, where there is a little inn. He calls there every evening coming down the valley from St Agata, and if you would like to meet him casually, as it were, you have only to set out a little before sunset, and stroll up the gorge; there you’ll find him.” The stranger went on to instruct Mr Joel how he should behave to the distinguished unknown—how, while carefully avoiding all signs of recognition, he should never forget that he was in the presence of one accustomed to the most deferential respect.

“Your manner,” said he, “must be an artful blending of easy politeness with a watchful caution

against over-familiarity; in fact, try to make him believe that you never suspect his great rank, and at the same time take care that in your own heart you never forget it. Not a very easy thing to do, but the strong will that has sent you so far will doubtless supply the way to help you further;" and with a few more such friendly counsels he wished Joel success and a good-night, and departed.

Mr Joel took his place in the "rotondo" of the diligence—no other was vacant—and set off that night in company with two priests, a gendarme, and a captured galley-slave, who was about to show the officers of justice where a companion of his flight had sought concealment. The company ate and drank, smoked villanous tobacco, and sang songs all night, so that when Joel reached Nola he was so overcome with fatigue, headache, and sickness, that he had to take to bed, where the doctor who was sent for bled him twice, and would have done so four or five times more, if the patient, resisting with the little strength left him, had not put him out of the room and locked the door, only opening it to creep down stairs and escape from Nola for ever. He managed with some difficulty to get a place in a baroccino to Raniglia, and made the journey surrounded with empty wine-flasks, which

required extreme care and a very leisurely pace, so that the distance, which was but eighteen miles, occupied nearly as many hours. It took him a full day to recruit at Raniglia, all the more since the rest of the journey must be made on foot.

"I own, sir," said Mr Joel, whom I now leave to speak for himself, "it was with a heavy heart I arose that morning and thought of what was before me. I had already gone through much fatigue and considerable illness, and I felt that if any mishap should befall me in that wild region, with its wild-looking semi-savage inhabitants, the world would never hear more of me. It was a sad way to finish a life which had not been altogether unsuccessful, and I believe I shed tears as I fastened on my knapsack and prepared for the road. A pedlar kept me company for two miles, and I tried to induce him to go on the whole way with me to Catanzaro, but he pointed to his pack, and said, 'There are folk up there who help themselves too readily to such wares as I carry. I'd rather visit Catanzaro with an empty pack than a full one.' He was curious to learn what led *me* to visit the place, and I told him it was to see the fine mountain scenery and the great chestnut and cork woods of which I had heard so much. He only shook his head in reply. I don't know whether he disbelieved me, or whether

he meant that the journey would scarce repay the fatigue. I arrived at Catanzaro about three in the afternoon. It was a blazing hot day—the very air seemed to sparkle with the fiery sun's rays, and the village, in regular Italian fashion, was on the very summit of a mountain, around which other mountains of far greater height were grouped in a circle. Every house was shut up, the whole population was in bed, and I had as much difficulty in getting admission to the inn as if I had come at midnight."

I will not trouble my reader to follow Mr Joel in his description of or comment upon Italian village life, nor ask him to listen to the somewhat lengthy dialogue that took place between him and the priest, a certain Don Lertoro, a most miserable, half-famished fellow, with the worst countenance imaginable, and a vein of ribaldry in his talk that Mr Joel declared the most degraded creature might have been ashamed of.

By an artful turn of the conversation, Joel led the priest to talk of the strangers who occasionally came up to visit the mountain, and at last made bold to ask, as though he had actually seen him, who was the large, strong-boned man, with a rifle slung behind him? he did not look like a native of these parts?

"Where did you meet him?" asked the priest, with a furtive look.

"About a mile from this," said Joel; "he was standing on the rock over the bridge as I crossed the torrent."

"Che Bestia!" muttered Don Lertoro, angrily; but whether the compliment was meant for Joel or the unknown did not appear. Unwilling to resume the theme, however, he affected to busy himself about getting some salad for supper, and left Joel to himself.

While Joel sat ruminating, in part pleasantly, over the craft of his own address, and in part dubiously, thinking over Don Lertoro's exclamation, and wondering if the holy man really knew who the stranger was, the priest returned to announce the supper.

By Joel's account, a great game of fence followed the meal, each pushing the other home with very searching inquiries, but Joel candidly declaring that the Don, shrewd as he was, had no chance with him, insomuch as that, while he completely baffled the other as to what led him there, how long he should remain, and where go to afterwards, he himself ascertained that the large, heavy-boned man with the rifle might usually be met every evening about sunset in the gorge coming down from St Agata; in

fact, there was a little fountain about three miles up the valley which was a favourite spot of his to eat his supper at—"a spot easily found," said the priest, "for there are four cypress trees at it, and on the rock overhead you'll see a wooden cross, where a man was murdered once."

This scarcely seemed to Joel's mind as a very appetising element; but he said nothing, and went his way. As the day was drawing to a close, Mr Joel set out for the fountain. The road, very beautiful and picturesque as it was, was eminently lonely. After leaving the village he never saw a human being; and though the evening was deliciously fine, and the wild flowers at either side scented the air, and a clear rivulet ran along the roadside with a pleasant murmur, there was that in the solitude and the silence, and the tall peaked mountains, lone and grim, that terrified and appalled him. Twice was he so overcome that he almost determined to turn back and abandon the expedition.

Onward, however, he went, encouraging himself by many little flatteries and compliments to his own nature. How bold he was! how original! how unlike other money-lenders! what manifest greatness there must be somewhere in the temperament of one like him, who could thus leave home and country, security, and the watchful supervision of Scot-

land Yard, to come into the wild mountains of Calabria, just to gratify an intellectual craving! These thoughts carried him over miles of the way, and at last he came in sight of the four cypress trees; and as he drew nigh, sure enough there was the little wooden cross standing out against the sky; and while he stopped to look at it, a loud voice, so loud as to make him start, shouted out, "Alto là—who are you?"

Mr Joel looked about him on every side, but no one was to be seen. He crossed the road, and came back again, and for a moment he seemed to doubt whether it was not some trick of his own imagination suggested the cry, when it was repeated still louder; and now his eyes caught sight of a tall high-crowned hat, rising above the rank grass, on a cliff over the road, the wearer being evidently lying down on the sward. Joel had but time to remove his hat courteously, when the figure sprang to his feet, and revealed the person of an immense man. He looked gigantic on the spot he stood on, and with his stern, flushed features, and enormous mustaches, turned fiercely upwards at the points, recalled to Mr Joel the well-known print over his chimney-piece at home. "Where are you going?" cried he, sternly.

"Nowhere in particular, sir. Strolling to enjoy my cigar," replied Joel, trembling.

"Wait a moment," said the other, and came clattering down the cliff, his rifle, his pistols, and his ammunition-pouches making a terrific uproar as he came.

"You came from Catanzaro — were there any gendarmes there when you left?"

"None, sire: not one," said Joel, who was so overcome by the dignity of the gentleman that he forgot all his intended reserve.

"No lies, no treachery, or, by the precious tears of the Madonna, I'll blow your brains out."

"Your Majesty may believe every word I utter in the length and breadth of the Peninsula; you have not a more devoted worshipper."

"Did you see the priest Don Lertoro?"

"Yes, sire; it was *he* told me where I should find your Majesty, at the well here, under the cypress trees."

"Scioccone!" cried the stranger; but whether the epithet was meant for Joel or the Curé did not appear. A very long and close cross-examination ensued, in which Joel was obliged not merely to explain who he was, whence he came, and what he came for, but to narrate a variety of personal circumstances which at the time it seemed strange his Majesty would care to listen to—such as the amount of money he had with him, how much more he had left

behind at Naples, how he had no friends in that capital, nor any one like to interest themselves about him if he should get into trouble, or require to be assisted in any way. Apparently the King was satisfied with all his replies, for he finished by inviting him to partake of some supper with him; and producing a small basket from under the brushwood, he drew forth a couple of fowls, some cheese, and a flask of wine. It was not till he had drunk up three large goblets of the wine that Joel found himself sufficiently courageous to be happy. At last, however, he grew easy, and even familiar, questioning his Majesty about the sort of life he led, and asking how it was that he never fell into the hands of brigands.

Nothing could be more genial or good-humoured than the King; he was frankness itself; he owned that his life might possibly be better; that on the whole his father confessor was obliged to bear a good deal from him; and that all his actions were not in strictest conformity with church discipline.

"You ought to marry again; I am persuaded, sir," said Joel, "it would be the best thing you could do."

"I don't know," said the other, thoughtfully. "I have a matter of seven wives as it is, and I don't want any more."

"Ah! your Majesty, I guess what you mean," said Joel, winking; "but that's not what I would suggest. I mean some strong political connection—some alliance with a royal house, Russian or Bavarian, if, indeed, Austrian were not possible."

"On the whole," said Joel, "I found that he didn't much trust any one; he thought ill of Louis Napoleon, and called him some hard names; he was not over complimentary to the Pope; and as for Garibaldi, he said they had once been thick as thieves, but of late they had seen little of each other, and for his part he was not sorry for it. All this time, sir," continued Joel, "his Majesty was always fancying something or other that I wore or carried about me; first it was my watch, which I felt much honoured by his deigning to accept; then it was my shirt-studs, then my wrist-buttons, then my tobacco-pouch, then my pipe, a very fine meerschaum, and at last, to my intense astonishment, my purse, whose contents he actually emptied on the table, and counted out before me, asking me if I had not any more about me, either in notes or bills, for it seemed a small sum for a 'Milordo,' so he called me, to travel with.

"Whatever I had, however, he took it—took every carlino of it—saying, 'There's no getting any change up here—there are no bankers, my dear Signor Joel;

but we'll meet at Naples one of these days, and set all these things to rights.'

"I suppose the wine must have been far stronger than I thought; perhaps, too, drinking it in the open air made it more heady; then the novelty of the situation had its effect—it's not every day that a man sits hob-nobbing with a king. Whatever the reason, I became confused and addled, and my mind wandered. I forgot where I was. I believe I sang something—I am not sure what—and the King sang, and then we both sang together; and at last he whistled with a silver call-whistle that he wore, and he gave me in charge to a fellow—a ragged rascally-looking dog he was—to take me back to Catanzaro; and the scoundrel, instead of doing so, led me off through the mountains for a day and a half, and dropped me at last at Reccone, a miserable village, without tasting food for twelve hours. He made me change clothes with him, too, and take his dirty rags, this goat-skin vest and the rest of it, instead of my new tweed suit; and then, sir, as we parted, he clapped me familiarly on the shoulder, and said, 'Mind me, *amico mio*, you're not to tell the padrone, when you see him, that I took your clothes from you, or he'll put a bullet through me. Mind *that*, or you'll have to settle your scores with one of my brothers.'

“‘By the padrone you perhaps mean the King,’ said I, haughtily.

“‘King, if you like,’ said he, grinning; ‘we call him “Ninco Nanco:” and now that they’ve shot Pilone, and taken Stoppa, there’s not another brigand in the whole of Italy to compare with him.’ Yes, sir, out came the horrid truth. It was Ninco Nanco, the greatest monster in the Abruzzi, I had mistaken for Victor Emmanuel. It was to him I had presented my watch, my photograph, my seal-ring, and my purse with forty-two napoleons. Dirty, ragged, wretched, in tatters, and famished, I crept on from village to village till I reached this place yesterday evening, only beseeching leave to be let lie down and die, for I don’t think I’ll ever survive the shame of my misfortune, if my memory should be cruel enough to preserve the details.”

“Cheer up, Joel; the King is to review the National Guard to-day. I’ll take care that you shall have a good place to see him, and a good dinner afterwards.”

“No, sir; I’ll not go and look at him. Ninco Nanco has cured me of hero-worship. I’ll go back to town and see after the exchanges. The sovereigns that come from the mint are the only ones I mean to deal with from this day forward.”

THE POLITICAL QUARANTINE.

IN one of Alfred de Vigny's clever sketches of the Reign of Terror, he gives a picture of the interior of the Bastille, and shows us the little children representing in their plays the terrible incidents that characterise the era. Here was one being tried for his life, here another being led to the guillotine, as though the passion of that thirst for blood had actually insinuated itself into the veins of infancy, and corruption begun from the very cradle. Nothing, however, is more true than that the presence of some great national calamity will so tinge men's thoughts with its colours, that all their daily actions and sayings will partake of the features of the disaster. A great flood or a great fire will leave after them innumerable traces in the expressions of a people long after their ravages have ceased.

I was reminded of this tendency to other day by an article I read in the 'Times.' It was a very able and well-reasoned paper on the respective merits of the various claimants for high office, and especially for the Premiership. The writer told us that Lord Russell was old, Lord Granville polite, Lord Clarendon diplomatic, and Mr Gladstone fully qualified for the highest post in the realm.

He showed us, at what I confess to have felt an unnecessary length, that because we had lately been ruled by a very able man in spite of his years, great age alone could not be esteemed a qualification for office, still less could the memory of that long catalogue of indiscretions which attached to Lord Russell, and made him more terrible as a colleague than as an opponent.

It was, however, when canvassing the claims of Mr Gladstone that the writer evinced that sympathy with the passing events of our time to which I have briefly made some allusion already. We live in an age of epidemics : with cholera, yellow fever, and the cattle plague besieging us, we are straining every nerve to guard ourselves against contagion, and by all the measures of a rigid Quarantine to keep out the dreaded pestilence. No wonder, then, if the author of this article—whose eye could never glance down a column without encountering ice - bags,

chlorine gas, and Mr Gamgee — should have felt himself warped by the prevailing tendencies of the time, and led to adopt not merely the expressions but the practices so incessantly presented to his notice.

His line of argument is this—Here is a great orator, a great financier, and a great rhetorician, with abilities to command the respect of Parliament, and an integrity above reproach. He is all that we want to lead an Administration, except in some trifling defects of coldness of manner and distance, which serve to repel followers, and what is more serious still, a boldness in innovation that, if allied with dangerous partisans, might lead us all much farther than we wished or ever intended.

The coldness might be cured. It is by no means impossible, indeed we have seen instances of it, that the possession of power will render a man genial, gentle, and accessible, who, in a subordinate station was restless, dissatisfied, and even uncourteous. It is the warmth, not the coldness, the writer says, we have to dread ; and what he advises in consequence is, that he should be "Quarantined ;" that is, that during the entire of the coming session he should be under the surveillance of a Political Board of Health, carefully watched and noted, all his symptoms recorded, his tongue especially looked to, and every

precaution taken, that if, by any mischance, he should have been infected, he should be immediately got rid of, and all danger from him arrested.

That he already exhibited premonitory signs of the malady called Extensive Reform, the last session clearly proved, notwithstanding the great pains he took to show himself in public, and declare he was in the enjoyment of his usual health, and the writer very pertinently calls attention to this fact, and says, We are no mere alarmists. When we had a mere threatening of the disease here last summer, the man was far from well ; his friends were really alarmed about him, and though he threw off the attack by certain alteratives, it was easy to see the tendency of his system, and that if we were to have an epidemic amongst us, there was not one who would be more exposed to the risk of contagion than this gentleman. All the physicians who saw him agreed that his state was precarious. They were unanimous in declaring that the air of Manchester would be fatal to him. It is but fair to say, that he listened to these wise counsels. He even avoided men who had once had the complaint, and in this way, to a great extent, reassured his friends, and relieved their anxieties. Now, however, says the leading article, we are threatened with a formal attack of the disease. Is it not better that, before we trust him with

our case, we see if he be in health to guide us? The wisest men we have say the malady is coming, and that it will need our best efforts to render it comparatively innocuous. It is so easily conveyed in cotton, that there is every reason to believe we may have caught this last contagion from America. At all events, it behoves us to see that the persons we trust to treat us should not be the first victims of the disease. Quarantine Mr Gladstone then. If he survive the session without cramps, we may pronounce him safe, give him a clean bill of health, and set him at liberty.

Now, to my own thinking, the most formidable feature of all this is, that it is from these men, so palpably liable to the disease, we are forced to take our doctors. Why, in the name of common sense, would you select as your physician the man whom of all others you would expect to be struck down by the epidemic the moment it has broken out? Why "look up" your doctor, in a time of yellow fever, from the ranks of the men with a liver complaint? or why anticipate the time of your possible illness, by putting your physician through a course of tonics that he may be well enough to treat you? and why subject a man to the restraint of a Quarantine whom you want to act with vigour, freedom, and independence? Men have passed

through their Quarantine and sickened the day after. Who is to say this may not happen with Mr Gladstone? But there is another alternative, and it is a formidable one. Suppose that he should say—he is a very crotchety man, and quite capable of it—"This, which you call disease, is rude health. This blueness and these cramps, and all the rest of it, are all signs of vigour. I refuse to be Quarantined for what is a normal condition, and I insist on being at large." Here is a contingency well worth considering; for he may say, "Bright has it, and Forster has it, and Stuart Mill, and heaven knows how many more. I'm not one shade bluer than half Manchester and all Stockport."

The majority, indeed nearly all the Board of Health, sit up-stairs in another House, and there will be no one to control him. Think, then, what must happen if he rushes madly out and infects thousands.

Your theory is, that before he is out of Quarantine you will know whether he ought to have a clean bill of health. I deny it *in toto*. He is not one to follow the peaceful precept of his chief—"Rest and be thankful." If you want his gratitude, it will be for action, not rest; and whether he be at large or in durance, my opinion is he will be dangerous.

And oh, dear me! what a spectacle do we present to the world, if the whole question of our future government resolves itself into the narrow choice of one of three men. Is there not in the length and breadth of the land one to be found who knows how to take a penny off the income-tax, that being the last test of all statesmanship? Is there no one who will be able to dispose of the surplus revenue by a little generosity to the tea-drinker? I ask pardon for the homely phrase—I mean the “consumer.”

And lastly, is it not, to say the least, a strange imbroglio to declare that a measure of reform is loudly called for by the country, and yet we are all straining our nerves to see how the man most capable to promote it shall be silenced and muzzled? Why these precautions, why these apprehensions, if you mean that this man's policy should be adopted?

And what shall we say of himself?—has he been shamming all this time under the late Premier's rule? or has he been fighting with his symptoms, and endeavouring to subdue them? I hope we shall learn this some day. I do trust we shall hear the history of his case, and an account of the treatment.

At all events, there is something good in the

Quarantine notion. I'd like to see Darby Griffiths and Locke King, and a few more I could name, with the yellow flag over them: not that I feel any strong conviction that, if it should depend on their improved condition, they would soon be likely to be at liberty.

Lastly, if we dread reform like a pestilence, if we take against it the precautions we are driven to adopt against a fearful epidemic, if we Quarantine all those whom we suspect may have had intercourse with the infected, and if every measure we take be to exclude the disease, or, if that be impossible, to moderate its ravages—if all these, I say, why declare it to be a purifier? why call it a necessity? why publish to the world, that without it the air we breathe, and the water we drink, will become pernicious and deadly? and, above all, why say, as some have said, that if we do not remove our restrictions and take off our Quarantine, the people will take the health laws into their own hands and admit the disease freely?

If it be pretended that reform be like vaccination—a less disease to cure a greater—I can accept this reasoning; and who knows but some parliamentary Jenner may tell us this in the coming session?

Meanwhile let us take the full benefit of the

analogy presented to us—let us whitewash and purify—let us live generously, but carefully; and if we discover any small premonitory signs of ill health, such as a tampering with a six-pound franchise, or a rule-of-three suffrage, let us think of Gladstone in his Quarantine, and be warned.

THE PICTURESQUE IN MORALS.

ONE of our periodicals lately contained a paper, inquiring, with some skill, into the sources of what we call the picturesque, and asking how it comes to pass that the ruined wall, the broken gable, the lichen-clad stone, afford us a pleasure that a trim enclosure, a finished building, and a well-scrubbed pavement fail to afford. Though the writer in question put some very searching and pertinent questions, though he exhibited in strong contrast the two sides of his thesis, I am not very sure that he did not leave us in the end to the same doubts and difficulties which beset us when we set out.

The search after truth is, however, a sort of veturino journey, in which, if you make little progress towards your destination, you are always gaining some small experience or other on the way. There is no fable so applicable to our daily lives as that of

the husbandman who bequeathed the treasure to his three sons, who arrived at their riches by a search after a very different El Dorado. This is the story of every one of us. For one man who goes straight to his object, and finds that object worth all his devotion. there are thousands who turn off into some by-path of fortune, well satisfied with what they have found there, and right contented to leave that great journey they once dreamed of to some later day ; and thus we no more realise to ourselves the greatness we imagined in our school-days than we marry our first loves, or do any one of the scores of things we once held to be the only tie that bound us to existence.

The author of the paper on the picturesque has not, I own, revealed to me the secret of that occult attachment that binds us to the crumbling arch, the shattered pillar, the lightning-struck trunk. We know, with our great humorist, that the Rector's horse is beautiful, and the Curate's picturesque ; but we cannot tell why ; nor can we explain why what to the eye of possession seems mean and miserable, to the eye of painting may have a value all but priceless. Let not my reader for a moment imagine that I have discovered the secret of this curious tendency—a tendency amongst educated people that is almost an instinct. I am as much in the dark about

it as my neighbours. In thinking over the matter, however, it occurred to me that there might be some mysterious chord in our nature that only vibrated to the touch of compassion—that we had in our hearts a little Bethesda pool of kindliness that adversity alone could stir, and that whatever inspired us with a sentiment of tender pity reacted in gratitude upon the object, and rendered it to our eyes pleasing, interesting, and picturesque.

Smug comfort and trim gentility have no want of us; they make no call upon our affections, no appeal to our sympathies. Nay, in their very self-sufficiency they seem to resent the interference of our interest. Not so with the ruined cabin or the tattered shieling, the weather-beaten hovel or the tottering tower; these come to us for pity. They have a story, and a touching one. They tell of a time when they bestowed comfort and shelter, they speak of a bygone—perhaps of even power and greatness. There are ruins which even in decay are princely; and in our sadness may lie the secret of that sympathy which binds us to them, and renders them, as all objects of our relief really are, our best benefactors. Bear in mind that through all our sense of the picturesque there mingles a tender melancholy. It is the spirit the very opposite to that inspired by the grotesque. There is no levity about it at all,

and from him who would endeavour to invest it with such a character, we would turn away revolted.

Whatever so touches our sensibilities that we weave a story about it to ourselves, that we think of it with reference to a past time—a time perhaps of bright promise and hope—that we fancy how under other circumstances a happier destiny might have befallen it, and that there must be some cruelty in the fate that has left of what was once beautiful these shattered columns, these broken capitals, these crumbling friezes; it is out of these mingled compassions and regrets we arrive at what, by a sort of compromise with our feelings, we call the picturesque.

Now, I am less anxious to prove my theory—which my reader may take for what it may seem worth to him—than to extend its application, and I would ask if a great deal of the sympathy we accord to whatever is wrong in this world of ours is not derived from a process akin to that I have just spoken of, and if our admiration of naughty people be not a part and parcel of our love of the picturesque?

That we *do* admire them I suppose will not be denied. We are not merely admirers; we imitate them in their style, their dress, and their belongings. Our novelists take them as their types of fascination, and our preachers warn us against them as snares.

Now, I would beg to ask, is it not their picturesque character that is the source of all this captivation? Is it not the reputation in ruins, the fissured fame, the gracefully dilapidated virtue, that we admire so fervently? Take up any French novel you will, and do you not find that the moral people are represented with all those traits of exactness and order which we reprobate pictorially, while the naughty ones are as broken, as irregular, as abounding in lights and shadows, as an Elizabethan manor-house? Is there a moment of hesitation where one would like to dwell? The faultless heroine is the semi-detached villa in the Edgeware Road. The erring loveliness is the embowered cottage on Windermere.

The architecture of the one is cold, formal, and unsightly. There may be scores of conveniences—there may be two kinds of water on the premises, and gas laid on; but who would not say, Let me rather have that lovely nest under the elms, with the river in front and the mountains behind, even though Ellen or Mary Anne should have to fill her pitcher at the well under the rocks?

The love of the picturesque extends to ethics, all the lessons that we imbibe about order, and neatness, and symmetry, becoming vanishing views when we find ourselves in presence of fractured moralities and tottering proprieties. The incessant play of light and

shade in doubtful natures makes them so pictorial to our eyes, that many a fast young lady is as good as an Etty, and I have seen young married women as rich in colour—I am talking pictorially—and as daringly composed as a Turner. It is no inherent love of vice, no preference of the wrong to the right, that makes French novelists give all the attractive features to the damaged reputation, and all the deterrent ones to the well conducted. It is simply because it is easier. The former “lends itself” naturally to picturesque description, the latter is only a matter of rigid right lines and rectangular shadows.

Let M. Blondin walk along the highroad, where it is broad, and smooth, and level, and how much interest will he excite? It is his perilous position, eighty yards from the earth, that appals us—it is the fact that a single inch to the right or left is death—it is the sense that he is doing something so terribly dangerous that no other could dare it—that attracts to him all our sympathy; and this is, perhaps, the explanation of the interest we accord to the naughty people. They are doing the most hazardous of all earthly things. They are *par excellence* the great rope-dancers; and we watch them with an anxiety certainly not diminished in its intensity, when they add beauty to their daring, and grace to their dexterity.

It is said that the frequent contemplation of the great works of art in Continental galleries has educated the expression of foreigners, and imparted to their features a higher meaning and a more elevated cast of countenance than we observe in our own people, who never look at anything but themselves. May not the constant image of French coquetry, so charmingly portrayed by French writers, have had a similar influence upon the manners of Frenchwomen, who behold, as in a glass, all the captivations that enslave, all the witcheries that bewilder, mankind? I have no doubt that this double reaction of cause and effect has done much for naughtiness. But what has most of all promoted its success is the sour aspect in which respectability has been pleased to display itself. I'm sure I'd rather leave all the good music to the devil than I would leave him all the good looks, all the charming ways, and all the little witcheries that poetise this dull life of ours, and show us that there are scores of things to interest us besides a rise in Turks or a fall in Mexicans.

Now, a group of the well-behaved beside one of the naughty is like hanging a Poussin next a Claude — there is no light, no brightness, no warmth, nothing cheerful or attractive, in that mass of dark-brown and olive; and we turn with pleasure to the

golden sunlight and the flickering water and the pink-streaked sky, as to a land of beauty and enjoyment. I heard a preacher t'other day declare that the naughty people were a snare; and I immediately thought, Why not try and ensnare us with the correct ones? I'm certain, in a vast number of cases, it is not vice that is attractive: it is the *mise en scène* of vice that captivates. It is, in short, the Picturesque that carries away our sympathies; and we are no more master of our sensibilities when exposed to its influences, than we are able to explain the mechanism of its action.

The dash of the realistic with the ideal that runs through naughtiness has a wonderful power. It is a double-shotted gun, sure to hit somewhere. What gave the peculiar attraction to the clever gallery of Leech we saw t'other day, was the blending of the actual daily life we lead with a subdued poetry. The artist displayed us as we are, but never failed to let in some slight indication of what we might be. The vulgar old frowsy mother was easily forgotten in the bloom and freshness of the long-eyelashed daughter; and if the former did not set your thoughts a-story-weaving, how beautifully suggestive was the latter!

The naughty people are adepts in this combina-

tion ; in other words, they are masters of the picturesque. Without them life would have no dramatic situations—no stage effects. Make the genteel comedy of this world out of lady patronesses and archdeacons, and how many would sit out the play ?

As to being snares, they are no more snares than the berries of the deadly nightshade, a very brief experience of which shows that they were not meant for nutriment. This world must have scores of things that cannot be made directly profitable to morality. What an abundance of glorious vegetation there is that never contributed to human life—and should we like to forego it ?

For my own part, I wish the well-to-do people would be pleasing. I'd like to meet charming bishops and fascinating Lady Bountifuls. I'd be much gratified if education commissioners were witty, and poor-law guardians amusing ; and, if they would only condescend to be picturesque, I'd withdraw my subscription from the other establishment, and never darken its doors again.

Once more I say, the great effort of moralists should be to keep vice to its coarse habiliments, and never let it masquerade in the bright costumes and graceful colours that captivate. Vice is not so seductive, as vice, as in its travesty of what we

admire and cherish. Sever the connection, and, like a bad swimmer without his life-belt, a few struggles will suffice to finish it.

Strip wickedness of its accessories, and you'll not have to call it a snare. When it ceases to be "picturesque," it ceases to be perilous.

SHALL BAGMEN DRINK WINE?

It is clear that we must have fallen upon a very dull season of the year, or the 'Times' would not have devoted so large a portion of its space to the controversy now agitating the Bagmen, as to whether they should drink wine at their dinner or not.

As it appears, however, to be a National Question, I incline to interest myself in it; and having duly weighed all that has been said on either side, I pronounce for the no-wine party. They declare that they have no desire to take wine, and they ask to be excused paying for it. The others opine that the greatest-happiness principle may occasionally press hard on individual interest, while on the whole it works for good; and that as wine is a great cementer of friendships, and tends in a high degree to draw closer the ties of brotherhood, it is a useful adjunct to such gatherings as theirs; and they less openly

suggest that wine, in England at least, has a certain smack of gentility about it, not without its advantage to the social station of Commercial Travellers, and eminently conducive to that high estimation in which these Gentlemen of the Road are deservedly held.

There is a great deal to be said for "the winners." It is one of those broad cases which soar above common sense, and rise to the higher region of sympathies, interests, and popular impressions. I can well imagine an ingenious man making a strong case for the Bacchanals.

Between the man who drinks wine and him who drinks beer at dinner, what an ocean of social difference may be said to roll! Wine is a brevet of gentility; it is the stamp of station, sharp, defined, and indelible. He who sits at table with his decanter beside him, knows that *there*, at least, his flank is defended. Wine, besides, as to Beer, is as the rapier to the single-stick; the whole use of the arm is at once more elegant, more graceful, and refined. The taper wine-glass offers to the hand the momentary resting-place before raising gracefully to the lips, and admits of many a little coquetry of winebibbing order, such as looking through, and the like. But how is the most gifted of men to dally with his quart? What amount of manipulation will throw elegance over his pewter?

C. T. knows this well. This man of patterns and fast trotters and box-coats is a devoted cultivator of the graces. Let the barmaids say what they think of his captivations. Who like him to weld the language of commerce to the purposes of Cupid, and convey through "raw goods" the declaration of a ripe passion? It was not, however, very easy to advance all these in the controversy, however they might have been made, as I feel they must, the subject of friendly and earnest remonstrance in private—"Wine Travellers" addressing "No-wine" with a natural eagerness to avoid the publicity of a newspaper discussion, and saying how indecorous and inexpedient it was to let the world have even a transient peep into that sanctuary of the road, the Commercial Room.

I am old enough to remember a controversy very like this in a distinguished cavalry regiment, and where one rebellious member of the mess insisted on his right not only to drink hock, but to have what was strangely called the "black bottle" on the table at his side—a breach of the dinner unities so gross, so outrageous, and so unheard-of, that it shook the discipline of the corps to the centre, and led to most serious quarrels.

Has C. T.—I ask for information—taken the ground of the anti-black-bottles in this question?

Is his fear that of a man who dreads to think of a time when pewter shall jostle cut-glass, and the vulgar quart in all its ungainly coarseness stand side by side with crystal? Does his prescient imagination display before him the degenerate manners and coarse habits that will thus flow in? Does he see in his mind's eye a future C. T. wiping the froth from his lips with, mayhap, his hand? Does he speculate on the decline of those airy graces that men display with the glass, and which are denied to the pint-pot? If so, I say, many of my sympathies are with him. I can foresee all these things, and my heart saddens to think of a commercial room less like a cavalry mess, and some future C. T.s that one would not mistake for the Fusilier Guards.

The wine system of the commercial travellers was not, then, a mere conviviality—it was something far more elevated and refined. It was the result of a process of reasoning on the lives, ways, and habits of Englishmen, their prejudices and their impressions. The men who drink wine are a category like the men who drive gigs. They are a sort of small Brahmins—Bagmen Brahmins, who would lose caste by beer. In the ante-Gladstone age Wine symbolised station: it was dear. Now, whatever is dear in England means not alone the luxury of the rich, but of birth, education, refinement, and condition. To reduce the ques-

tion to its mere festal elements was then only a side-view of the matter in dispute. The Bagman's pint of sherry was not a measure of fermented grape-juice, it was his blazon of nobility; and the No-wine men are less the apostles of a temperance movement than they are the advanced-guard of a stern and ruthless democracy. Down with cut-glass! down with gentility! is their savage cry. They are the John Brights of the road, the levellers, the equalisers. With beer, they say, we shall have a severer code of manners—no more of those amicable coqueties of touching glasses, no little sportive drolleries across the table. Men will sit grave and still, and look as black and as bitter as the liquor before them.

Men have remarked that wine is the product of Catholic countries, and that beer belongs to lands which uphold the stern, cold, defiant aspect of Protestantism: that wine is the drink of men who love traditions, and revel in the poetry that tints the past with the present; while beer is the beverage of ungraceful realism—of the trader and the chapman.

May it not well be, that some long forecasting commercial traveller—one whose gaze stretches far away beyond dry goods and fancy articles—has peered into the dim future, and descried the dangers that would gather around a remote generation of Bagmen, if all the poetising influences of life were to

be withdrawn, and they to be left alone with their "sales" and their samples? I like to think that these must be Gladstonian Bagmen, who will not merely treat the question in its financial, its social, or its moral aspects, but rise to the dignity of its "æsthetic" considerations; and not impossibly discover correlatives for Bagmen in the ancient mythology!

Ulysses himself was a sort of commercial traveller, and the Odyssean element is eminently distinctive in the race. I am sure, therefore, that in this discussion now before us, some of the litigants at least regard the issue as one involving interests and results very different from such as connect themselves with a "two-and-sixpenny suit!" But I return to the vulgar view of the question, since it is the only one the parties concerned have deigned to present to our notice. Had they approached the subject on hygienic grounds, it would have been interesting to know what fluids our medical authorities would have suggested as the suitable daily drink of so highly excitable a class; and whether, on the whole, lemonade, or a pleasant syrup, might not have been "exhibited" in their case with advantage?

The special maladies of classes are attracting much attention at this moment, and we are enabled to see why needle-makers go blind, why shoemakers are

dyspeptic and house-painters have colic; would it not be humane as well as interesting to push our inquiries farther, and learn why are bagmen so sanguineous—so generally obtrusive, noisy, and overbearing, with that plethora of animal spirits that constitutes “bumptiousness”?

If I ever attend a Social Science Congress, I promise to read a paper on this subject.

Not the least strange part of the controversy turns upon what is admitted by both sides—the fact that the cost of the wine enables the landlord to give these gentlemen a dinner far more luxurious and appetising than could be afforded at the price charged. I cannot say how it may be with others, but for my own part I read this statement with much astonishment. Till that moment I had not the very vaguest conception how these gentlemen lived. I fancied, in my ignorance, that they dined like country gentlemen or barristers, or other persons of like station. I imagined that they took hotel fare like the rest of us, and made a hearty meal off the sirloin or the saddle, with a little fish, perhaps, and a fricassee. It was only incidentally to the wine question came out the fact, that Bagmen were a species of errant aldermen, and that every station of a commercial journey was celebrated like a Lord Mayor’s day.

I never knew that the apartment reserved espe-

cially for their meetings was a temple of gastronomic excesses, and that for them were reserved the choicest supplies of the market—all the delicacies of the season.

Some ascetic dogs declare that they do not require all this. "Let us have," say they, "a simple dinner"—primitive creatures! they are content with salmon and turbot, southdown mutton, and a capon (not the worse of oysters), a damson tart, and some stilton. "We are men who require cool heads and clear faculties; let us incline, therefore, to temperate habits."

It was the modesty of this tone, the genuine honest humility of this protest, drew me first towards the No-wine men, and I said to myself, If the arduous fatigues of their career can be supported on such a diet, it is highly commendable in them to descend to it; and I bethought me that there was hope for them. Dr Richardson, I remembered, lived twenty-seven days in the arctic regions on nothing but pemmican.

Shall I own it was by this modest declaration that these men drew me to their side? People who are self-denying like this, thought I, must be surely worthy of respect. They say, "We desire to eat simply, and drink not at all." Not, perhaps, exactly this, but they say, "No salmon at four shillings

a-pound, no venison, not always capons, fewer partridges, no sherry—not a glass.”

I cry Hear to all this. I cheer the sentiment heartily. In my enthusiasm I would even go farther, and I would say, leaving the wine question totally aside, Why are these men to live more sumptuously than half the working clergy of England, the country doctors, and lawyers, and surveyors, and a score more of educated and cultivated gentlemen? Why are they, with or without sherry, to sit down to a dinner the like of which very rarely figures on the board of well-to-do country squires? Why is their life on the road to be so totally removed from their life in the family? Why are they, when immersed in business, the cares of which they take pains to tell us require qualities pretty much like those of a Cabinet Minister, to gorge like incoming Sheriffs? and why, above all, is the world to be bored with the discussion about their diet, and how it agrees with them?

Till they opened the subject themselves, how very few of us knew anything about their habits or ways. A general impression indeed prevailed that they were a talkative, pushing, presumptuous set of people, somewhat loud of speech, and self-asserting; but as to by what dietary these gifts were sustained and nourished — what artificial supplies recruited them—how they stimulated their faculties by ali-

ment—of all these, I repeat, the world lay in total ignorance.

I will venture to declare that not one educated man in fifty, nay, in five hundred, knew that these people dined better than the officers of a marching regiment. Wine, indeed! I like the notion! Beer, and of the very lightest, to wash down a mutton-chop dinner, is the dietary I should propose for them.

Are they to dine better than the gentlemen who are styled Pensioners at our Universities? better than all the vicars, and half the beneficed clergy of England? How many half-pay soldiers and sailors dine in this fashion? How many of those who supply the admirable reading of our public journals live in this way?

No intelligent groom ever thought of giving beans to a mettlesome horse, or over-stimulating the beast that was already too fiery, For the selfsame reason I would say, Don't overfeed your Bagmen. They are troublesome enough as it is. All who travel by rail or river know they are the most bumptious of mankind. Water their grog rather than strengthen it for them; and now that they are asking the world how much they should drink, take the happy moment to tell them what they should eat also.

TWADDLING REMINISCENCES.

BOOKS of gossip, reminiscences, and twaddle, are just now greatly in vogue, and I think bespeak a very low state of public taste. When such books were written with smartness, much knowledge of life, and bore upon them, besides, the impress of a strong individuality in the writer, their popularity was intelligible enough; but ours is not an age of Horace Walpoles, and the consequence is, we are deluged with little dreary diaries in which the most uninteresting people in the world record where, how, and with whom they lived, the only point being the personality, and the sole relief to the uniform dullness lying in the reader's conviction that if the perusal of such trash be dreary, the inditing of it ought to be drearier still.

First of all, the mass of these writers, stimulated by that selfsame vanity that has driven them into

print, are possessed with an intense desire to be personally favourites with their readers. They want you to think them high-minded, noble, generous creatures, with grand motives and high aspirations. They desire to make you believe it is no small privilege to be admitted to their society, surrounded as they are with the high and mighty personages that figure through their pages. They impress you with not only their acquirements and information, but with a profound respect for their social condition—the daily habits of their lives—their nice taste—their admirable breeding.

In a word, they admit you to a circle of wits, beauties, men of genius, and men of power, all to see that they themselves are centres around which these celebrities are "doing orbit," so that you naturally feel abashed by the very thought of criticising or questioning any statement put forward by such mighty authority. What! shall I arraign the judgment of him who knew Metternich and Talleyrand?—who talked political ecstasies with Madame de Staël and cosmogonies with Humboldt?

It is thus these people present themselves always. From the high ground of intimacy with men of distinction they discourse to us small folk on Men and Women and Things in General, not at their own risk and peril, however—not courageously saying, I think

this, I say that, I proclaim the other—but, under the shield of a great name, shooting forth some petty slander or small irony on a contemporary, as though “in our set,” “we,” “nous autres,” had this estimate of him—such was our opinion, and you know who “we” were.

The first thing to bear in mind with respect to these *Raconteurs*—and I am driven to a French word in spite of myself—is, that it may be assumed as a maxim that great men are never great with little “people.” It is not the Duke of Wellington as he was that we see in Mr Raikes’s book; it is Mr Raikes’s conception of the Great Duke—a very different matter indeed! It is surely not enough that the portrait-painter should have a great subject, he should have also the power to understand it—to appreciate and to depict it.

Now, it may be confidently asserted, that of the men admitted to the real intimacy of the great, nothing is rarer than to find one who has the leisure, the taste, or the talent to be an author.

It does not belong to these people’s lives to write books; or, if they do, are they books of gossip and small-talk? The men who make history have not any very high estimation of the men who write it. Indeed the very unfaithfulness with which passing incidents are treated inspires this contempt,

and suggests a low opinion of those who practise it.

Whenever, therefore, we find a page studded with illustrious names, flung out in all the careless ease of everyday acquaintanceship, and read, "I was with Her Royal Highness on that morning at breakfast when the news came," &c. &c.; or "walking one evening in the garden at St Cloud with the Duc d'Orleans, when we came to that little group representing," &c., we are cheated for the moment into a sense of expectancy—we say to ourselves, "Here is a prince about to open his heart to us; for once we are about to know what these men are by nature—how in the freedom of their friendships——" and then we come upon a little twaddling remark or a small jest that might have been said by His Highness's valet. Very disappointing is all this: but there is worse—far worse, in the conceited self-complacency of the narrator, impressing upon us at every word what good fortune is ours to have met with him—what a happy turn of fate it was that led us into his company.

I suspect that a really good diary would be a very difficult literary performance, and one totally out of the reach of any but a very gifted individual: to record briefly, sharply, and yet clearly, passing incidents; to jot down the leading events of a life,

giving them the degree of importance hereafter that would illustrate the time they were written in, and the light they would throw upon the manners of an age; to seize the characteristics of an era, and preserve them by a story or an anecdote; to connect the great events of the time with the smaller ones that were simultaneous with them; to be at once thoughtful and at ease; to exert your mind to treat the events of the hour sagaciously, and yet never lose the tone of intimacy, which is the best feature of a journal—to write, in fact, as you would talk to a friend over the fire, when that friend was one to whom you would not willingly show yourself as dull, incompetent, or commonplace:—all this cannot be so easy as to be the gift of each and every who writes his *Life and Times*.

It is quite certain that no small part of the pleasure such books as these afford us is derived from the fact that they exhibit great people, the mighty rulers and conquerors of the world, pretty much in their ordinary lives as small and as everyday as ourselves.

An Emperor with a lame charger or a tight boot, or a court beauty with a disaster to her back hair, is not a whit more dignified in her wrath than the stockbroker our neighbour when upset in his cab, or his lady wife when disappointed by her dressmaker.

We like to know how, besides taking their share of the ills that flesh is heir to, Kings and Kaisers have their fits of sulk and moroseness, and suffer their little mortifications of wounded self-love and vanity like the rest of us ; and it is very pleasant to us to hear that, even to the common forms of our everyday use, these people must come when they want to express themselves, just as they have to breathe the atmosphere with us in common, and grow warm under the same sun. Still, I opine, all this is not very instructive or very elevating reading. I suspect that we are all prone enough to deterioration without being urged to it by a stimulant. So far from any over-estimate of those above us, I think the turn of our age is to hold them too cheaply, and we certainly do seize upon any disparaging element in a great character with an avidity akin to that we display in unmasking a rogue and exposing an impostor.

To all these varieties of our bad taste, these memorial-mongers minister. They say, Here is a gossip-loving public to whom nothing is sacred. The more we can reveal to them of the private life of our victims the better. Let us display them, then, in their hours of sickness and depression—in their times of exaggerated gaiety and folly—in their moments of excited vanity and success. Strange if

some words of weakness, some dropping syllables of self-love or absurdity, will not escape them ; and what a triumph to show how the conqueror of Blenheim could be shabby over a sixpence, or the hero of Trafalgar shed tears of delight over his own praises in a song !

Were the allied fleets of France and Spain,—was the fatal marksman in the maintop, as terrible an enemy of poor Nelson as the biographer who lately wrote of his life at Dresden ? Had the great Emperor such a foe in all his fiery career as that Doctor who chronicled his last years at St Helena ?

And these are the people whom we encourage and foster, notice in all our leading journals, and nourish to fifth editions. O evil generation of gossips ! why will you revel in your neighbour's shortcomings ? Is there one of those who has made his name great amongst us of latter years who would not have been greater without his biographer ? Why is it that the Great Duke stands forth pre-eminent above all ? is it not that it is by his own glorious acts, told in his own honest words, that we must regard him ? His despatches defy the biographer. He stands there beyond the perils of praise or slander.

Think of poor Moore ! All who knew him—and there are some left can recall the bright sunshine

of his presence, his beaming eye, his smile, his chirping accents, whether in wit or song—and read of him in Lord Russell's biography, and with what bitterness, what positive anger you turn to traits in his nature of which you should never have been told.

Why were these brought into the Record? What of carelessness—what of indelicacy—was there in not cancelling what mere taste, if there were no friendship, would have erased? Was there ever yet that man whom biography could not make little? Take him who deals with the greatest themes—with the highest powers of mind—and has he not his ills and ailments, his days of depression, his seasons of fretfulness and impatience, and his times of distrust and disbelief? Is it of these we ask the registry? do we want the chronicle of the words he uttered in his pain, or the bitter syllables that broke from him in his passion? We are severe in our execration of the wretches who strip the dead on the field of battle, but we have no words of blame for those who do infinitely worse—who strip the fair fame of such as have shed lustre over our age, and made our own lives more enjoyable—as have, so to say, admitted us dull folk to the warmth of their glowing genius, and let us feel for the moment the ecstasy of their own gifted

natures. For these spoilers we have nothing but praise.

Of course there is the other school—those who hold a brief for their hero, and make him out a monster of unmitigated virtue. I declare, if I were driven to the choice, I had rather have my “life taken” by the former than by these.

The great statesman we are now mourning has not escaped the indiscreet zeal of these ill-advised admirers. Not satisfied to chronicle the genial traits of a charming nature—not content to dwell upon the graceful qualities by which friends were won and adversaries were conciliated—they insist upon presenting him to us as a sayer of smart things—sharp, pungent, and epigrammatic.

Now, Lord Palmerston had not a particle of Wit. There is not on record one saying of his which might not have been uttered by any member of his Cabinet; and this is to say all that need be said.

He was the essence of a “man of the world;” but it was the “man of the world” elevated by great cares and great duties; accustomed to deal with the weightiest interests and the grandest themes, his good sense stimulated to its highest exercise, and his elastic temperament pressed, but not crushed, by the weight upon it.

They said he “knew Parliament well;” but I am

certain he knew "the Salon" better; and it was in transferring to "the House" the happy tone and manner that won success with the world, that he achieved his great triumphs in public life.

Madame Lieven said of the Great Duke, that he had a little more common sense than all the rest of the world; so might it be affirmed of Lord Palmerston, that he had a little more tact than all the rest of mankind. Even in France, the land of tact *par excellence*, he had not his equal.

Let none take a low estimate of the quality, which is, after all, *epigram in action*, being the quick-wittedness of one whose sympathies embrace so many temperaments, that he is never at a loss for the argument to address, the flattery to apply, the palliative to suggest. What a boon to a great deliberative body to have had a man thus gifted ever infusing this spirit into its deliberations! What a gain to less happily endowed natures that this fine, genial temperament was able to contribute its wealthy resources to all around, and make a very atmosphere of influence about him!

It was the rarest thing imaginable for him to speak in a more elevated tone, or to treat a question in a more lofty spirit, than he would have used in talking to a friend over a bottle of claret. The very stories that made his "apropos," the jests that sup-

plied his points, were precisely such as mingle through after-dinner talk.

The day of witty people is gone by. If there be men clever enough nowadays to say smart things, they are too clever to say them. The world we live in prefers placidity to brilliancy, and a man like Curran, in our present-day society, would be as unwelcome as a pyrotechnist with a pocketful of squibs.

That Lord Palmerston's personal qualities gave the whole popularity his administration enjoyed, none will deny. His racy, manly, high-hearted temperament was a great element to throw into a Cabinet of dreary Whigs and speculative Radicals. The Irishry of his nature was a spell that told upon the phlegmatic materials he was allied to, and his geniality was the link that connected the Cabinet with the country.

They take very low ground for Lord Palmerston, to my thinking, who simply regard him as the restraining element in the late Ministry—the power by which headstrong and venturesome men were held in check, and their projects for change firmly and resolutely resisted. By assigning to him such a part as this, they represent him to us pretty much in the light of a military chaplain at a mess table, whose presence is just sufficient to repress the levity of

the company, but whose influence has never gone far enough to introduce a more elevated tone in conversation, and whose departure will be the signal for all sorts of excess.

I think higher of Lord Palmerston than this. I believe that in restraining his colleagues he gave the country time for reflection, and that in that interval the country became Conservative—not Conservative in the interest of this man or of that, but in a spirit of distrust in great changes—in a settled confidence that we were well governed—in the conviction that the country exercises a greater and more direct influence over the men they sent to Parliament than was ever possessed before, and in a growing belief that to increase the pressure of such influence might not be either salutary or safe.

Such, to my thinking, were some of the late lessons of Lord Palmerston's life, and we owe him, for them, a far more enduring gratitude than had he been a wit and an epigrammatist; and they who would invest him with these are but forging his name to a bill which his fame will dishonour.

"Make me not Rich nor Poor," was the prayer of one who knew wisdom; and how many of those whose lives we have lately been reading would willingly have made the same supplication?

It is time, however, to discourage these Brummagem

biographies—these jotting down diaries, which, assuming the tone of intimacy, think they can dispense with good taste. That they fail egregiously in all truthful evidence of what they treat, is in almost every man's experience to prove. Most men who have moved at all in the world, have met occasionally persons of note and distinction, and yet, let any one of those endeavour to convey some notion of the traits of those same celebrities—their look, manner, tone, or gesture—and will he not own that his sketch does not recall, even to his own eyes, the original; that in the very tableau of which they formed part, there was so much that assisted the scene, that gave it vigour and reality, to omit it is fatal, and yet it cannot be revived? What deeper bathos is there than to hear the jest repeated by dull mediocrity that you once had heard from Sydney himself? And this is just what these reminiscence people are doing every day and every hour. Boswell was forced to descend to a Parasite that he might rise a Biographer. These people want the crown without the martyrdom; nay, more, they ask for a share of their hero's honours, and a place beside him on his throne.

Good biography, like good champagne, is all that is excellent, healthful, and agreeable. It is the fictitious liquor that is baneful, the stuff that acidifies

while you drink it, and actually engenders a dislike to the noble tippie it counterfeits.

“Campbell,” said Lord Lyndhurst, referring to the ‘Lives of the Chancellors,’ “has added one more to the terrors of death; for if I do not outlive him, he will write my life.” Now, though I never was charged with the custody of the Queen’s conscience, my own tells me that the sentiment was a most natural one.

THE END.

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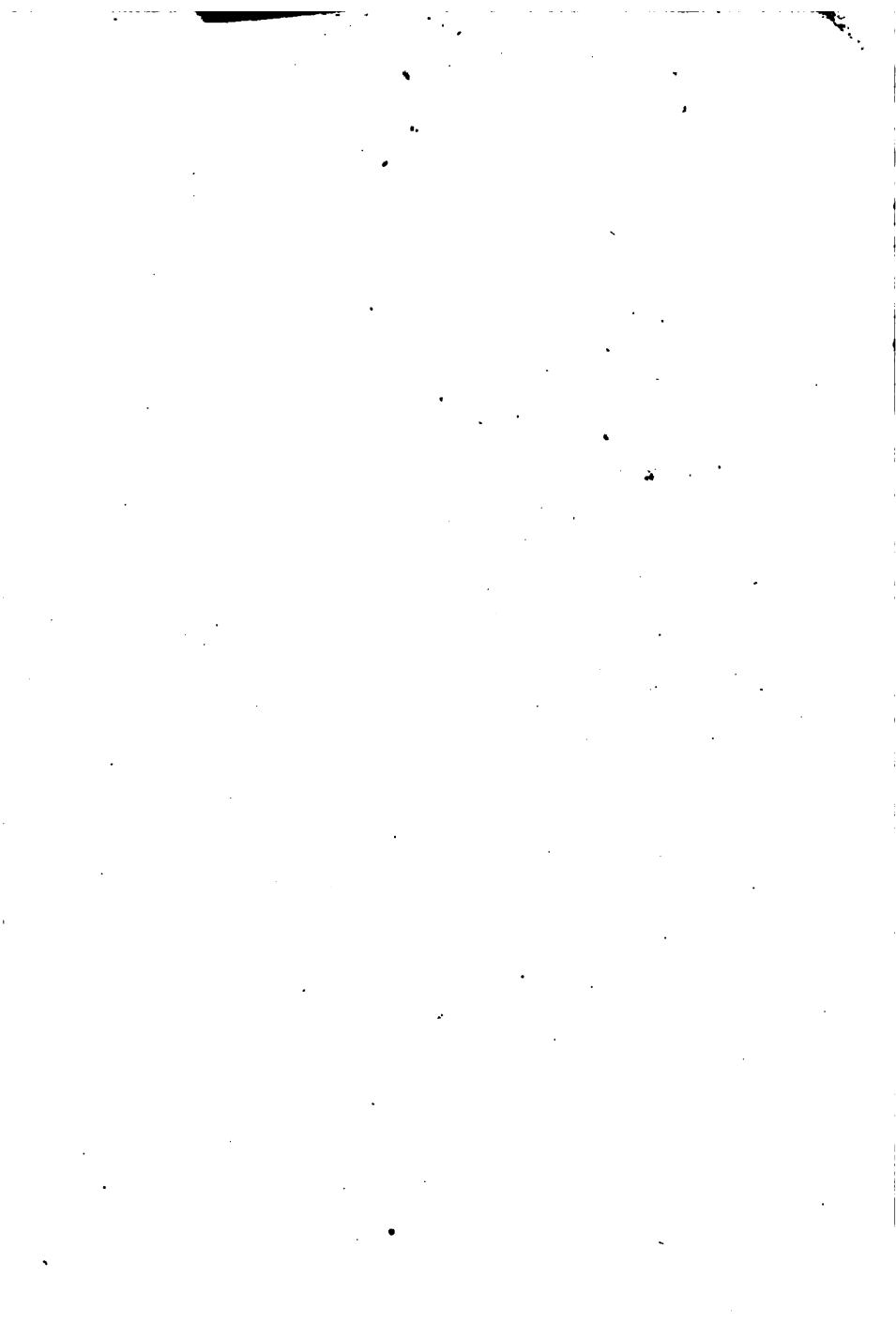
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